

DIALECTICS OF CONTINGENCY: NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHY OF ART

Matthew Rampley

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*Dialectics of Contingency: Nietzsche's
Philosophy of Art*

Matthew Rampley

Ph.D. Thesis

University of St. Andrews

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Abstract

This thesis examines the function of art in Nietzsche's philosophy. Its primary concern is with Nietzsche's turn to art as the means to counter what he terms metaphysics. Metaphysics is a metonym for the system of beliefs sustaining our culture whereby human judgements about the world are perceived as uncovering an objective truth antecedent to those judgements, with an implicit faith in the possibility of exhausting the totality of these antecedent truths.

This thesis consequently has two principal strands. The first is to analyse Nietzsche's criticism of metaphysics. The second is to explore the way in which, using a specific understanding of art, Nietzsche attempts to reconcile extreme scepticism towards all forms of human knowledge with a continued belief in their necessity. The thesis argues that Nietzsche lays an importance on art as providing an aesthetic education to replace the misguided theoretical orientation of metaphysics.

Nietzsche criticises metaphysics for its inability to recognise that its interpretations are mere interpretations, that logic and the rational serve as means to make the world meaningful from the human perspective. My thesis explores how he sees art, and in particular the tragic, as constituting a mode of world interpretation which declares its status as such. I argue that for Nietzsche this is crucial inasmuch as a failure to recognise the contingency of our interpretations results in a refusal to give value in any interpretations. For Nietzsche the advent of the Modern age heralds the danger of such refusal, and hence I argue that his turn to art is a response to the specifically Modern temptation to descend into mere cynical Nihilism.

Declarations

a) I, Matthew Rampley, hereby certify that this thesis which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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b) I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No. 12 in October, 1989 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in June 1990; the higher study for which this is the record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1989 and 1992.

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c) I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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Declaration

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to Ελένη

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A Note on Editions

The edition of Nietzsche's work I have used in this study has been the *Kritische Studienausgabe* published by Walter de Gruyter and the Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag in 1980. The edition is itself based on the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, which latter has become accepted as the standard modern edition. I have assiduously avoided referring to English translations, for a number of reasons. First, for the sake of consistency I found it preferable to refer to one single edition rather than to the various translations of Nietzsche published works, not to mention the plethora of collections of his Nachlaß notes. The most notable of these latter is of course *The Will to Power*, which Karl Schlechta had already declared suspect on account of the editorial methods used in its production.

As regards the Nachlaß notes the situation is complicated by the fact that there are also various other collections, such as *Die Unschuld des Werdens* [The Innocence of Becoming] or *Das Philosophenbuch* [The Book of the Philosopher] (the latter being popular in France) both unavailable in English in any case, not to mention the vast numbers of aphorisms published only in the current standard edition. Hence to avoid referring to an overly large number of editions in both English and German, I found it preferable to refer to one single German edition which contains all the material present in those other editions. Hence much of the material I refer to will be familiar to those acquainted with *The Will to Power* while much will also be based on aphorisms often neglected.

I have also preferred to refer to the German edition since in many cases the various translations lack unity amongst themselves in the translation of terms which remain constant in Nietzsche's writing, and in some cases are actually misleading. Though I would not venture to claim that my own modest attempts represent the highest achievement in the art of translation, it was frequently more useful to produce my own rendering of the German.

Introduction

The title of this thesis is 'Dialectics of Contingency: Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art.' As such, it is intended to thematise a certain tension within the work of Nietzsche, a tension with which Nietzsche is constantly occupied and which, one might argue, is a lasting legacy of his work. I am referring to the problem of reconciling a radical scepticism regarding the meaningfulness of the world with the continued necessity of believing in the possibility of its having meaning. In short, Nietzsche is concerned with the question of how the radical sceptic might avoid becoming a Nihilist, and how one might combine acknowledgement of the contingency of all values with a continued belief in their necessity. It is this problem which this thesis will be argue as being central to Nietzsche's thought, a preoccupation which only achieves some form of satisfactory answer through art.

Before I develop this point further, though, I should like to point out a paradox to the title of my thesis. Namely, the existence of a tension between Nietzsche, or rather between much that his thinking is currently taken to signify, and the demands of dialectical rigour. Since the seminal interpretation of his thought by Gilles Deleuze in 1962¹ it has become an orthodoxy that the work of Nietzsche represents the supreme moment in counter-Hegelian thought. Though there have been a few dissenting voices,² most current commentators on Nietzsche follow Deleuze's reading, seeing him as the essential thinker of difference, an interpretation that explicitly opposes the totalising tendency of the dialectic, which will always seek to negate, to reduce the other, where the process of *Aufhebung* will only preserve the other by simultaneously cancelling it out. In the hands of Deleuze, even will to power becomes a means to the affirmation of difference, of plurality, despite the many passages where Nietzsche writes of will to power overcoming, or simply negating, opposition.

Not content with Nietzsche's explicit expressions of mistrust with regard to the system building of Hegel, subsequent commentators such as Tracy Strong have understood the anti-Hegelianism of Nietzsche's thought to inhabit his writing at a more fundamental level. Strong sees Nietzsche's use of genealogy, for example, as being specifically shaped to undermine the structure of dialectic. Rather than gathering up, genealogy seeks to take apart, to lay bare the working of signs and their history, in order to dismantle the cultural constructs of contemporary society. Strong notes that 'In a genealogical understanding, there is almost no automatic logic to the evolution of a set of events, certainly no *Aufhebung* .'³

Notwithstanding the merit of such interpretations I shall nevertheless be claiming, however, that Nietzsche's relation to Hegel is considerably more complex than one of mere rejection or overcoming. The tension between Hegel and Nietzsche, and those between contingency and necessity, are, I would claim, inscribed everywhere within the corpus of Nietzsche's work, and I shall work through these tensions as they appear with the aim of analysing the manner in which art becomes the means to release them, to effect a provisional reconciliation (I add the word 'provisional' to articulate the difference between what I read as occurring in the text of Nietzsche and what I perceive to be the specific operation of *Hegel's* dialectic, where each successive *Aufhebung* points towards that final moment of absolute determination).

Nietzsche's philosophy in many senses represents the first real deconstruction of what has gone before. By this I mean that his work contains both a sceptical de-struction of metaphysics and a post-metaphysical con-structive moment. The sceptical moment is familiar to his readers, and it is his polemics against contemporary society, his relentless tirades against Christianity and Plato, and his ridicule of Kant, the 'great Chinaman of Königsberg', which constitute his identity in the eyes of most. I am arguing, however, that this scepticism is but a mere negative moment which itself is to be preserved in order then to be superseded once more. Nietzsche's construction of a post-metaphysical thinking is not executed by a complete departure from the tradition, but is rather undertaken by pushing through to their limits the implications in the thought of Kant, Descartes, Hegel and so forth. At this point we see again the strong affinity between Nietzsche and Hegel, and between Hegel and Derrida, whose term 'deconstruction' I have used to best describe Nietzsche's stance toward metaphysics. When Hegel discusses the double sense of the term 'Aufheben', as both a process of preservation and negation, concluding that 'what is sublated [das Aufgehobene] is at the same time preserved; it has lost only its immediacy but is not on that account annihilated,'⁴ he is giving expression to a process bearing profound similarity to that of deconstructive interpretative practice and the play of *différance*, as Derrida himself admits.⁵ We see evidence of this Hegelian dual relation to the tradition in the ambivalent attitude Nietzsche harbours towards Kant, Hegel, and more significantly, Socrates, as Alexander Nehamas suggests.⁶

On the basis of this simultaneous negation and appropriation of metaphysics I would therefore characterise Nietzsche's post-philosophy as an attitude of irony, not in the sense of a wilful playing with forms, though this may be in many cases what he is aiming to accomplish, but rather in the sense of maintaining a pathos of distance. Distance towards one's own values and those of one's culture, knowing

them to be purely interpretative stances towards the world, lacking resilience when put under scrutiny, while simultaneously adhering to them as if they had something more than a purely contingent worth, and I shall examine this pathos of distance in Nietzsche in my opening chapters.

This is the basic framework I employ in my exposition of Nietzsche, and as such it constitutes the main core of my first two chapters. In Chapter one I offer an articulation of the above problem as it relates to Nietzsche's critique of knowledge and truth, and to his awareness of the significance of metaphor and interpretation for any process of con-structive thinking. In particular I shall be outlining the relation between the dialectic and the notion of interpretation, a term which Nietzsche turns to in order to resist the metaphysical delusions of knowledge.

In Chapter two I discuss these issues as they relate to Nietzsche's critique of subjectivity. I argue in like manner to Chapter one that Nietzsche is concerned not with the mere destruction of a key metaphysical concept, namely the subject, but rather its transformation in order to twist free of the limited metaphysical understanding of selfhood. Decentering is not dissolution. The claim is crucial inasmuch as I shall assert that Nietzsche's writings on art are incomprehensible if we see him as proclaiming the death of the subject *tout court*, most particularly because of Nietzsche's emphasis on the artist as the key to overcoming metaphysical culture and its attendant Nihilism.

Having laid out the basic parameters of my discussion of Nietzsche, I turn to the specific theme of art, to the manner in which this tension in Nietzsche's work is fully worked out and resolved by the model of the artist and the artistic creation of meaning. In one sense, writing a full-length study of Nietzsche's philosophy of art is an impossible task. Nietzsche does not have a unified philosophy of art or aesthetic theory in the same way that one might take to be the case for Hegel, Schiller, Schopenhauer. Instead, Nietzsche's œuvre presents us with scattered writings frequently lacking any apparent unifying theme. Moreover we come up against the fact that his only substantial treatment of the subject belongs to his early years, after which Nietzsche's thought underwent considerable changes as he left the shadow of Schopenhauer, changes which lend it a frequently fragmentary and disjointed character. I have nevertheless attempted to overcome this problem by discerning themes in his writing on art which recur, which are both closely connected and also serve to provide some means of releasing the wider tension which I have outlined above.

In Chapter three I offer an interpretation of *The Birth of Tragedy*. I attempt to understand that work, and most particularly the much analysed function of the Apollinian and the Dionysian, by emphasising its Hegelian structure and its

considerable indebtedness to theories of the sublime. Just as the sublime presents an existential challenge, namely coming to terms with the finitude and contingency of human existence, so tragedy presents the annihilation of the stable symbolic world (i.e. the death of the hero) as a challenge to one's ability to construct an interpretative schema one knows to be contingent, and ephemeral. As such the dialectic of Dionysus and Apollo prefigures the key motifs already discussed above. Not merely a therapeutic device to 'hide' the nausea of Becoming as one recent commentator has suggested⁷, tragedy becomes, in my reading, a challenge to live *with* Becoming.

In Chapters four to seven I examine the ways in which the dialectic of the contingent and the necessary, Dionysus and Apollo is recast in the light of the developments Nietzsche's thought undergoes from the mid-1870's onwards. I am thus arguing that although one can discern a very real transformation in Nietzsche's thinking, the sense of rupture which many prefer to see actually conceals certain continuities in his work. In particular *The Birth of Tragedy*, although labouring under the influence of Romanticism and Idealism, presents ideas which persist, albeit in altered form, throughout Nietzsche's career. In many respects one could read Nietzsche as engaged in the uncompleted project of constantly recasting the ideas at work in *The Birth of Tragedy* in the light of his more general development.

In Chapter four I discuss why Nietzsche comes to reject the Schopenhauerian (and Wagnerian) context which gave rise to *The Birth of Tragedy*. More specifically I shall look at his critique of the notion of transcendence which plays a large part in the thought of Wagner and Schopenhauer, a notion which always threatens to govern the argument of *The Birth of Tragedy*. Having outlined Nietzsche's rejection of the metaphysical inclinations of his early mentors I shall go on to a wider discussion of his rejection of the notion of transcendence, a notion bound to the dualistic thinking of metaphysics. In keeping with his critique of the metaphysical yearning for the beyond, I shall argue that Nietzsche employs a number of themes in order to establish a counter-philosophy of 'immanence', themes which ultimately centre around art.

In Chapter five I look at the temporal aspect of Nietzsche's 'immanentism', discussing his critique of metaphysical (Aristotelian) time. Here I shall not only discuss his 'thought of thoughts', namely Eternal Recurrence, but also analyse his early work on the problem of history in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*. It has recently been claimed⁸ that the second *Untimely Meditation* diverges from Nietzsche's later work on time inasmuch as it sees history as a problem to be overcome, in contrast to the later writings which represent an affirmation of the

temporal flux of Becoming to the detriment of any stable, and petrified, régime of pure Being. My own interpretation rather views the two periods as united by a common concern to think through the problem of the relation of permanence and historicity in a manner parallel to Nietzsche's wider concern with the relation of contingency and necessity.

As in the case of these latter, more general problems, I shall argue that in Nietzsche we are dealing neither with a pure rejection of the metaphysical notion of Being, nor with a simple, unqualified embracing of the idea that everything exists (inasmuch as the notion of existing has any real role to play here) as a Heraclitean flux. Nietzsche is too subtle a thinker to imagine that the mere introduction of the word 'Becoming' (which in any case cannot help but reify the idea in any case) will suffice to overcome the metaphysical fixation with stability, as if one could ignore the reasons for this fixation. Consequently I am not claiming that Nietzsche is putting forward a description of originary time in place of the derived time of metaphysics (in the Heideggerian manner), since he would claim that the character of any such time is a matter of interpretation. Rather, I would argue, he is putting forward the *thought* of Eternal Recurrence as a normative idea, constitutive of a post-metaphysical thinking, one which holds the tension between Being and Becoming, repetition, permanence and decay, in check.

I conclude this chapter with a consideration of the way in which art constitutes the practice which best embodies this new temporal orientation. Nietzsche is unfortunately never explicit on the relation of art and time, and this chapter is one which requires considerable imagination, tempered with due caution and care, in order to construct such a relation from the fragments of Nietzsche's work. The move is not, however, an illegitimate one, since strong links can be made between art and the temporal structure of the interpretative dialectic as I articulate it in the first chapter, a link embodied in Nietzsche's adoption of Dionysian Classicism as an aesthetic norm. Dionysian Classicism serves for Nietzsche as the mark of 'authentic' artistic praxis, one which preserves a sensitivity for the monumental in history, and so brings us back to the key concern of history, temporality and Eternal Recurrence. We see in Dionysian Classicism an exemplification of an interpretative and representational practice embodying Eternal Recurrence, preserving both history and the ahistorical, the contingent and the necessary through its representational mode.

In Chapter six I examine the function of his use of physiological metaphors as a second strategic device in his critique of (metaphysical) notions of transcendence, and his turn towards immanentism. I shall be claiming that his use of biological vocabulary does not signify a brief interest in the 'positivist' sciences,

but rather constitutes part of this reaction to some of the dangers in his earlier work, a reaction which remains a central part of his thinking into his final work. The body, in Nietzsche, thus serves as a bridge between his critique of metaphysics, for which embodiment exceeds the confines of rational discourse, and the aesthetic turn in his own thinking.

In this chapter I also discuss Nietzsche's application of physiology to the question of art and in particular shall be examining his claim that 'all art is applied physiology'. I examine the role this vocabulary plays in his mature writing on art. This includes analysing the way in which Nietzsche uses the physiology of art as a means of distancing his later writings on art from the Idealist connotations of *The Birth of Tragedy* and also as a tool for undertaking a critique of the formalist aesthetics of *l'art pour l'art*, a way of thinking which can be traced back to a partial reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and in particular of his remarks concerning disinterestedness.

In Chapter seven I continue my exploration of Nietzsche's critical stance towards the aesthetic tradition from Kant onwards by looking at his critique of two related notions which, like the formalism of *l'art pour l'art*, stem from one-sided readings of Kant. The first is the idea, first fully developed by the Romantics and subsequently perpetuated by Hegel and Schopenhauer, amongst others, that art constitutes a sensuous representation of the truth. The second notion is the idea that the key to aesthetic theory lies in the analysis of the experience of the spectator. I shall be showing how Nietzsche strives both to set art apart from truth and also to stress the importance of the aesthetics of the artist. Both these themes serve to direct the discussion of art away from the metaphysical fixation with truth and towards the notion of art as interpretation, through linking artistic creativity to interpretative will to power. This last exploration is crucial since for Nietzsche it is the artistic transformative interpretative praxis which is to serve as the model for a more general interpretative practice.

In the final chapter I gather up the arguments of the previous chapters in order to provide a more general articulation of the problems with which this thesis has been concerned. The unifying theme is the claim that Nietzsche uses the discussion of art and artists to imagine how a post-metaphysical world might be, i.e. how it might confront the loss of the metaphysical world view without falling into the abyss of reactive Nihilism. Art and the artist's interpretation of the world serve as a model for this post-metaphysical culture inasmuch as they combine both the sense of radical contingency (i.e. concern only with appearance, with immanence) and necessity (i.e. the Classical work as providing an *enduring* presence) demanded of such a culture. Nietzsche's ideal, however, also relies on

the assumption that only a certain type of praxis deserves the appellation of art. I shall consequently be examining further the criteria of 'authentic' art, as Nietzsche understands it, contrasting it with those art forms which the later Nietzsche held to be unaesthetic, such as popular theatre, Wagner, Realism and so forth. This comparison will also go on to consider the relation between the aesthetic practice Nietzsche envisages and the contemporary aesthetic of the Post-modern.

There is one final problem, however, one which needs to be explored in order to validate the entire project of this thesis. It involves establishing some set of characteristics which mark off artistic interpretation from that of, say the sciences or philosophy. Nietzsche's assertion that there is only interpretation, not knowledge, coupled with his early critiques of language, has made us think twice about the distinctions previously drawn between the discourses of science and literature. If scientific research is just a matter of interpretation, its discourse turns out to differ little from that of the arts. Nietzsche's arguments in this regard have had an explosive effect on contemporary philosophy and literary criticism, with deconstruction as a method (inasmuch as one can reify its practice in this way) devoted to reading the texts of philosophy against themselves precisely through the analysis of figural language in those texts, and the process whereby figurality undermines the claims apparently being made by the surface conceptual discourse of texts. If we consent to this mode of thinking, to the claim that the discourse of philosophy and the sciences and that of the arts should be elided, the purpose of this thesis is going to be put into doubt. By agreeing that scientific and artistic interpretations do not differ *in kind*, it will be difficult to justify a thesis which examines the privileged claims made on behalf of artistic praxis. Moreover if Nietzsche himself lies at the origin of the deconstruction of the distinction, we have a doubly difficult task. In this work, however, I shall be suggesting ways in which it might still be meaningful to distinguish between the two modes of interpretation; I shall also be suggesting ways in which this distinction can be made on the basis of Nietzsche's own writing. To elaborate further, however, would at this point preempt the argument of the thesis, and hence I here make way for the main text.

Notes;

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. H. Tomlinson (London: Athlone Press, 1983).

² Cf. Daniel Breazeale, 'The Hegel - Nietzsche Problem', *Nietzsche Studien* 4 (1975). Breazeale's argument not only suggests ways in which Nietzsche's thought still bears the traces of Hegel's,

but also points out the extent to which Deleuze's portrait of the latter thinker amounts to an insensitive caricature.

³ Tracy Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), p. 30.

⁴ Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 107.

⁵ In his essay on *différance*, Derrida writes, '*différance* . . . maintaining relations of profound affinity with Hegelian discourse . . . is also, up to a certain point, unable to break with that discourse . . . but it can operate a kind of infinitesimal and radical displacement of it . . .'

See *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) p. 14.

⁶ Alexander Nehemas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1985), Chapter one. I say this ambivalence is significant since Socrates is the founder of the cultural formation Nietzsche seeks to undermine.

⁷ See Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁸ Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau. A Study of Nietzsche's Moral and Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Contingency and Dialectics. Interpretation and Truth

Nietzsche's scepticism differs from that of David Hume. This is not meant merely to point out that they were different writers, concerned with varying issues, united only by a common mistrust of the pretensions of human knowledge and science. I am not concerned with the divergences between the details of their projects as much as with the fundamentally different bases from which they launch their sceptical attacks on knowledge. Hume, despite his sceptical regard towards the rational, remains firmly within the circumscribed boundaries of metaphysical discourse. His mistrust of, say, causality, stems from the suspicion that it constitutes a misrepresentation of what really is the case. Bound to the Empirical tradition from Bacon onwards, his contention is that since our knowledge of the world is derived from the mere succession of sense stimuli from without, all attempts to organise those stimuli into a meaningful whole are mere acts of synthesis, telling us nothing about the reality underlying those stimuli, unable even to predict whether those stimuli will be the same tomorrow.

Nietzsche's scepticism is of a different order, less overturning the discourse of metaphysics than displacing it, bringing into question what kind of activity philosophy actually is. For his critique of metaphysics is not carried out in the name of some higher truth. What fuels his critique is the approach to philosophy which views it as a discursive practice and his conviction that its status as such has been misrecognised. Although his writings concern themselves with philosophy, the history of philosophy and the philosophy of science, it is as a philologist that he interprets the work of philosophers, and as a cultural critic that he judges their worth.

I shall develop this point further, but for the moment it is important to see why it is important to make a claim such as this. If we assume Nietzsche is just 'writing philosophy' when he discusses Kant, Plato, Schopenhauer and so forth, we will frequently be disappointed by the result, judged by the canonical standards of philosophical argument. His so-called 'revaluation of all values' will look like a tired repetition of overly familiar Humean and Kantian themes. The suspicion that Nietzsche may well be doing little else than repeating, or stating more baldly, conclusions implicit in Kant and Hume is aggravated by the fact that Nietzsche himself, most especially in his posthumous notes, displays a somewhat vulgarised understanding of Kant, and more generally of the history of metaphysics, giving the frequent impression that he is attacking a straw man.

A brief example will illustrate the point in hand. In a note from 1885-6, he formulates the following criticism of Kant: 'A "thing-in-itself" just as absurd as a

"sense-in-itself", a "meaning-in-itself". There is no 'state-of-affairs-in-itself', but rather a sense must first be added, so that there can be a state-of-affairs'.¹ Most revealing and interesting about this fragment, and there are numerous others which argue in a like fashion, is Nietzsche's implicit assumption that Kant, the obvious target, unequivocally maintained the existence of 'things'-in-themselves, 'meanings'-in-themselves and so forth. Now although Kant may well have personally been reluctant to admit as much, a merely cursory reading of the Critique of Pure Reason will establish that his critical project must implicitly be in agreement with Nietzsche on precisely this issue dealt with in the latter's note quoted above.² The core of the Critical Project consists in an overturning of the Empiricist understanding of knowledge, replacing it instead with the model of knowing as making. The knowing subject is an active world-maker in Kant, determining a priori what can be considered *as* an external stimulus, a thing, a meaning, and so forth. While one might accuse Kant of not having thought the problem through to its proper conclusion, it is evident that his 'Copernican revolution' of necessity has to rule out talk of pre-existing 'things' waiting to have qualities predicated of them, or pre-existent 'meanings' waiting to be determined.

If we subscribe to such an interpretation of Nietzsche's work, we will be forced to conclude that his critique of metaphysics is not very original, and express incomprehension at the importance currently accorded to a thinker who on this account hardly deserves high praise. However, if we interpret him in this manner we are displaying a lack of sensitivity to two salient aspects, one biographical and the other textual. Regarding the former it is important to remember that Nietzsche's chosen profession, albeit short, was as a classical philologist. Although he inveigled against the ponderous, myopic practices of 'Altertumswissenschaft' of the late nineteenth century, I would nevertheless argue that Nietzsche's training to understand literary texts in a certain way was one which dominated his understanding of texts in general, and more specifically those of the philosophers.

The second aspect to Nietzsche which one must take into account is the fact that his early work is always concerned with culture and language, whether it is the problem of language in the highly theoretical essay of 1873 entitled 'On Truth and Falsehood in their Extra-moral Sense' or the relation of language and music in tragedy and Wagnerian opera. As such I would argue that these two factors, Nietzsche's philological training and his concern with language provide the basis for the greater part of his subsequent working over of the problems of metaphysics. Of course these claims are not particularly original, since his thematisation of philosophical language has become a pivot organising many Nietzsche interpretations of the early 70's, such as those of Kofman, Pautrat or Derrida,

which in differing ways examine Nietzsche's use of metaphor in his 'deconstruction' of metaphysics.³

However, while I would affirm the importance of such a 'turn' in the interpretation of Nietzsche's work, it is nonetheless arguable that Nietzsche's concern does not rest with the problem of language, but rather sees language as a first step, a weapon in the battle to bring the cultural institution of metaphysics into question by undermining its discourse. It is to this process that I now turn.

Metaphors and Truth

Nietzsche's concern with philosophy can be traced back to his essay 'On Truth and Lie' which unravels the intertwinement of truth and language, metaphor and concept. The view he is seeking to criticise by his insights is the correspondence theory of truth, where truth becomes the *adaequatio intellectus et rei*.

Countering the correspondence theory of truth, Nietzsche makes three claims, of which the first serves as the basis for the other two. The first claim Nietzsche makes is that truth is a function of language, not vice versa. The notion that language is a more or less adequate expression of the truth is one which has a venerable history, whether it be the Platonic notion of rational dialogue as a prolegomenon to the revealed truth of the Forms, or the tradition from Aristotle to Descartes, Locke, and the Port-Royale *Logic*, which sees words as a medium for the communication of subjective ideas, themselves non-linguistic mental events. As Baker and Hacker have pointed out⁴ it is an idea which ironically still pervades the work of the grandfather of post-structuralism, Ferdinand de Saussure, who in his *Cours de Linguistique Générale* speaks of the conversion of mental ideas into language.

Nietzsche turns this relation about, imagining a primal scene, whereby a form of social contract was enacted to enable the survival of the human species. With this originary 'contrat sociale' there occurs 'something which looks like the first steps towards the accomplishment of that enigmatic drive for truth. Namely, the fixing of what is to count as "truth", i.e. a universally valid and binding designation for things is invented, and this legislation of language produces the first laws of truth, too: for there arises for the first time the contrast between truth and lie: the liar uses the valid designations, words, in order to make the unreal to seem real . . . he misuses the firm conventions through the wilful confusion or even inversion of names' (KSA 1 pp. 877-8).

Although Nietzsche's description of language as a process of naming comes close to the so-called Augustinian theory of language which Wittgenstein, amongst others, has been keen to discredit, his argument that truth is a matter of linguistic

convention surely has a great deal of force behind it. For if we assume any proposition about the world, ourselves or anything else to be of the form ' p is q ' we can surely only judge its truth content if we know what it means to say that p is q . This is not to produce an argument in support of the notion of truth-conditional semantics, since the relation between truth and meaning does not hold the other way, i.e. it is perfectly possible to understand the meaning of a sentence without being able to judge the conditions under which it might be true, indeed for some sentences the notion of attempting to find a truth condition would be absurd. However it is to assert that truth is a function of semantics, and more specifically grammar. As Josef Simon notes, 'A sentence which intends to be *true* . . . must first have been constructed as a *meaningful* sentence according to the rules of a language . . . Seen in this way, the sentence which is possibly true is a special type [Spezialfall] of meaningful sentence of a specific language of a particular life context.'⁵ It is an argument Nietzsche holds on to throughout his career speaking in a note from the Nachlaß of 1887 of 'the evaluation "I believe that such and such is the case" as the *essence* of "truth" ' (KSA 12: 9 [38] p. 352).

Following Nietzsche's argument we can conclude that the true proposition is merely a particular kind of meaningful sentence: truth is always already preceded by meaning and by grammar. It is a conviction which forms a central weapon, some might contend *the* central weapon, in Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, and it is one which he keeps throughout his career as a thinker. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, he poses the rhetorical question 'Might not the philosopher be able to raise himself above the belief in grammar?' (KSA 5 p. 54), having already claimed earlier that 'The miraculous family resemblance of all Indian, Greek and German philosophising can be explained easily enough. Precisely where there is a relatedness of language it is unavoidable that . . . from the beginning everything lies ready for an identical development and succession of philosophical systems, just the path appears closed off to certain other possibilities of world-interpretation' (ibid. p. 34). As is well known, and as I shall be examining in detail in the next chapter, one of the consequences of this determination of truth by grammar is the philosophical belief in the subject, itself a parallel to the grammatically determined belief in God. As Nietzsche exclaims in *Twilight of the Idols* 'I fear we shall never be rid of God, because we still believe in grammar . . . ' (KSA 6 p. 78).

Nietzsche's claim that language precedes truth, and ultimately that language precedes thought, is not startlingly original in itself. The linguistic turn in philosophy can be traced back to pre-Romantic thinkers such as Hamann and von Humboldt, together with Romantics such as Schleiermacher. The latter thinker in particular, is the first to move away from the notion of the subject as a transcendent

thinking being, supplanting this with the idea of language as the ground of thought. He notes, for example that 'There are no thoughts without speech', adding that 'one cannot think without words.'⁶ However, Nietzsche differs from these earlier thinkers in his other claims which follow on from his initial premise about the mediating function of language. I am referring, of course, to his claims regarding the radical metaphoricity of language.

If we return to his essay of 1873, we see Nietzsche asserting language to be radically metaphorical in two distinct ways. The first argument is that language and that which it denotes are fundamentally heterogeneous. Nietzsche asks 'What is a word ? The representation of a neural stimulus by sound' (KSA 1 p. 878), then later adds 'A neural stimulus first translated into an image ! first metaphor. The image then transformed again into a sound ! Second metaphor. And each time a complete leap from one sphere to another completely different and new' (ibid. p. 879). Explicitly countering the Aristotelian notion of words as an expression of mental events, he writes 'there is no causality, no correctness, no expression, at most rather an aesthetic relation, I mean a suggestive carrying over, a stuttering translation into a completely foreign language' (ibid. p. 884).

Nietzsche's reference to neural stimuli could be seen as a gesture towards Empiricism, yet this would be to miss the nature of his claim. Empiricism can still be seen as holding fast to the notion of causality. The stimulus causes a certain response, and language is a description of this external world. Hence Locke's insistence on plain language as a means to achieve an adequate such description. In contrast, however, Nietzsche is implicitly criticising this Empiricist view in his claim that the relation of word and world is one of fundamental difference in kind. No description can ever hope to represent the world adequately since the very idea of a description is misled. What masquerades as a description turns out to be an extended metaphor, sundered from the world by an enormous gulf. Nietzsche employs a striking image to give force to the heterogeneity of the two: 'A painter whose hands are missing and who wanted to express the image hovering before him by singing, will always betray more through this exchange of spheres, than the empirical world will ever betray of the essence of things' (ibid.).

In essence Nietzsche's view seems close to Kant, as I have already suggested, though he is seeking to push through to their furthest limits certain conclusions implicit in Kant's thought. Nietzsche has no time for Kant's 'categories' of understanding, and he has doubled the sense of alienation from the 'world' by including not only an empirical world, which through human sensibility necessarily mediates the known world, but also by taking into account the constitutive role of language in forming the empirical world. Moreover there is an additional sense in which language mediates the empirical world and severs us from

it, and here we come to Nietzsche's second claim as to the metaphorical nature of language and truth.

The second process of metaphorisation occurs when language leads to the construction of concepts. Nietzsche writes, 'Let us think of the formation of concepts: every word immediately becomes a concept by virtue of the fact that it is to serve as a reminder not only of the unique, completely individualised primal experience, to which it owes its origin, but rather simultaneously has to fit for countless, more or less similar ones (i.e. strictly speaking never identical), hence for totally dissimilar ones. Every concept originates in the identification of the non-identical' (ibid. pp. 879-80). Offering a concrete example of this process, Nietzsche describes what happens with the concept of the leaf, which is meant to serve as a denotation for a large variety of leaves, all of them dissimilar, a dissimilarity which is neglected due to the levelling process of using the same word to refer to all. Generalising the conclusion of this particular example, Nietzsche writes that 'The overlooking of the individual and the actual gives us the concept . . . against which nature knows no forms or concepts, hence no types, but rather just an indefinable X, inaccessible to us' (ibid. p. 880).

Against the dynamic nature of the world, 'the great construction of concepts displays the stark regularity of a Roman columbarium, and in logic exhales the discipline and frigidity which is proper to mathematics' (ibid. p. 882). As Sarah Kofman has pointed out,⁷ Nietzsche uses a wide variety of architectural metaphors to suggest the very process of petrification which occurs when logic appropriates the world and makes it into a system of reiterated and iterable units. As Kofman indicates, Nietzsche refers to the construction of concepts as similar to the production of a columbarium, with its associations of death. More significantly, still, he uses that archetypal symbol of death in life, of mummification, the pyramid, to describe the 'order of castes and ranks' (ibid. p. 881) built up by such a régime of truth.⁸

Nietzsche sees language as introducing a false universality into the world of experience, which strictly speaking, he regards as utterly contingent. Once again, even if we disregard his outmoded view of language as consisting of a series of names, we have to take seriously his claim that language, through the repetitive nature of signification, transforms the world of discursive meaningfulness into one of regularity and consistency. Although we are tempted to reject his view of the sign as a name, we can nevertheless subscribe to his assertion that the prerequisite for any sign within a system of signification is iterability. It is a notion that has become the bedrock for twentieth century linguistics, adopted both by Structuralism and Post-structuralism, and curiously enough, also by Anglo-American philosophy of language, in particular by speech-act theory.⁹

By virtue of its extension from its original situation to other, non-identical cases, the concept operates metaphorically, and truth itself, through its process of identification of the non-identical, becomes an aesthetic relation between dissimilar experiences and between the subject and the object (Nietzsche still employs the vocabulary of Idealism in this early essay), producing a synthetic unity between the dis-unified. On the basis of this conclusion he makes the now overly familiar assertion that truth is a 'mobile army of metaphors' (ibid. p. 880).

Following Nietzsche's argument in this early essay we can identify language, and more particularly language's mediating function in the constitution of truth, thought and meaning, as providing a foundation for Nietzsche's attack on metaphysics. Criticising the notion of truth as a process of uncovering, of concepts as somehow describing something in the world, he places language at the foundation of truth, as determining what is permitted to count as true, where the concepts employed by any particular idea of truth, or to use the Foucauldian term, 'episteme', and the world to which they refer are fundamentally heterogeneous. Propositions concerning the world are translations, and moreover translations which cannot but mis-translate, inasmuch as they always introduce a false universalisation into the world.

Yet at this point we have only just begun, both chronologically and thematically, with Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics. For his concern is not so much with language per se, as with the wider cultural problems which accompany the misunderstanding of the constitutive role of signs in understanding. In short, he is concerned not with merely correcting an error (after all Nietzsche does not disapprove of error per se), but with correcting the catastrophic consequences of that error. I am referring to the problem of Nihilism. Overcoming Nihilism involves a two-fold process; first, offering a critique of those assumptions which have created ground fertile for its advent, and second, offering a paradigm which can point out ways in which it can be left behind. At this stage, I am aware that in Nietzsche's work the notion of Nihilism is deeply ambivalent, as Gianni Vattimo has recently pointed out¹⁰, but I shall delay discussion of its finer nuances until later.

Amnesia, Metaphysics

If we return to 'On Truth and Falsehood in Their Extra-moral Sense' we find Nietzsche offering an explanation as to why this metaphorical relation to the world has been transformed into the thinking of metaphysics, where words correspond to 'things' in the world. Nietzsche's answer is amnesia. Due to an over-familiarity with the signs of our system of meaning, we have forgotten that they are mere

metaphors, that they bear a purely arbitrary relation to the world, itself a notion reified through the process of signification. Nietzsche presages his argument early on in the essay when he notes that 'It is only through forgetfulness that a person could ever come to imagine they were in possession of a truth . . . ' (ibid. p. 878), a claim he fleshes out a few pages later, asserting that the individual 'thus forgets the original intuitive metaphors [Anschauungsmetaphern] as metaphors and takes them for things themselves' (ibid. p. 883). It is a theme one finds dealt with in his unpublished notes from the same period, which confront the relation between recollection, cognition and repetition, a relation which itself recalls the intertwining of dialectic and remembrance in Hegel.

The Hegelian connection is made quite obvious in a note from 1872, where Nietzsche writes 'The similar recalls the similar and identifies itself with it : that is cognition, the swift subsumption of the identical. Only the similar perceives the similar: a physiological process. The very same thing which is memory is also perception of the new' (KSA 7: 19 [180] p. 475). Repeating the argument for the levelling effect of concepts, Nietzsche introduces the theme of recollection, as that which mediates between different experiences and facilitates the universalising effect of language to occur. The process of recollection transforms the similar into the identical and thence the subsumptive activity of 'knowing' occurs, an operation which bears remarkable similarity to that of the dialectic and *Aufhebung*. Memory is what permits the metaphorising effect of language to take place, without which we would be subject to a random succession of meaningless sense impressions. It is an argument Nietzsche repeats in *The Gay Science*, noting that in the process of cognition, 'something unknown is to be led back to something familiar' (KSA 3 p. 594).

In a further note from the same notebook Nietzsche clearly sees the reducing effect of memory as a consequence of a mimetic urge, and contrasts this with the metaphysical idea of knowledge. He writes, 'Imitation is the opposite of Knowledge inasmuch as Knowledge does not grant validity to translation, but will rather keep a firm grip on the impression without metaphor . . . To this end it becomes petrified, the impression is ensnared and delimited by concepts, then killed off, skinned and mummified and preserved as a concept. Now there are no 'authentic' [eigentlich] expressions, no true Knowledge without metaphors. . . The most familiar metaphors, the usual ones, now count as truths and as the measure for the more infrequent ones . . . Knowledge is merely a working with the favourite metaphors, thus a process of imitation which is no longer felt as imitation' (KSA 7: 19 [228] pp. 490-1).

This connection between memory, metaphor and knowing is one which Nietzsche affirms throughout his writings. Even in his mature works Nietzsche's

basic argument still stands, namely that whenever we imagine we are learning something about the world or ourselves, and he becomes especially critical of the natural sciences, we are in fact doing little other than recovering what we have already projected into the world. The new is always assimilated to the old, memory and perception of the new are the same operation. He writes in *Beyond Good and Evil* that 'when we introduce and mix the world of signs into things as if it were their "in-itself" we proceed once more as we have always proceeded, namely mythologically' (KSA 5 p. 36). Attacking the delusions of physicists, he writes in a note from the Nachlaß of 1887 that 'They have forgotten to take the power of constructing perspectives into their account of true being . . . in the language of school, their being-as-subject [das Subjekt-sein]' (KSA 13: 14 [186] p. 373).

We can identify amnesia as lying at the heart of the myths to which metaphysics subscribe, myths to the effect that we can somehow know the world as it is, that we have no constitutive function in the determination of its character, myths which are quite opposed to Nietzsche's contention that 'Philosophising is a kind of atavism of the highest order' and that philosophers' thinking is 'less a discovering than a re-cognising, recollecting, a return and home-coming' (KSA 5 p. 34). It is this difference which permits one to recognise the distinction between Nietzsche and Hume which I asserted at the beginning of this chapter. Hume's scepticism is borne out of a desire to know the truth, and thereby resembles the Cartesian reduction of everything except the cogito. In contrast Nietzsche would have no such delusions, given his recognition of the radical metaphoricity of all discursive knowledge. Scepticism carried out in the name of true knowledge, which attempts to exclude everything that is extrinsic to the bedrock of absolute certainty, is a self-defeating project. As Nietzsche notes in the opening sections of *Beyond Good and Evil* Descartes' maxim, 'de omnibus dubitandum' is one which Descartes himself fails to adhere to, not only in his dogged faith in the certainty of the cogito, but also in the very fact that his reduction is executed in the name of truth, in the name of some foundation. To be consistent, scepticism has to be an anti-foundational discourse.

Contrasting Nietzsche with Hume and Descartes in this manner, we conclude that for Nietzsche philosophy is not a matter of verisimilitude, indeed no discourse can be. Instead, it is a discursive practice, an interpretation (a theme with which I shall deal in a subsequent section) produced by a certain episteme, or régime of truth. This is not to assimilate Nietzsche's thinking to that of figures such as Rorty, Fish, Lyotard, or, on occasion, Derrida. Nietzsche does not see the loss of foundation as implying an abrogation of ethical concern, as compelling us merely to assent to what is already practised and believed, as Stanley Fish claims,

for example.¹¹ Rather, Nietzsche's concern is with the consequences of certain epistemes, and in particular with that of metaphysics. As a cultural critic, he is concerned with changing the episteme that has governed Judaeo-Christian culture. To understand this more fully we must delve further into the discourse of metaphysics.

Nietzsche likens the process of concept formation to that of constructing a tomb, an act of petrification, in that the very nature of the concept as an iterable sign promotes a demand for universality and identity. In one sense it is inevitable, given that truth is a function of grammar, that the genesis of concepts, of truth values will be forgotten, since conceptuality *per se* excludes thought of Becoming, of the non-identical, in short of the contingency of the world. In his later writing on interpretation, Nietzsche also sees the reduction of difference and of Becoming as a function of the human form of life, claiming that 'Behind all logic and its apparent sovereignty of movement there stand evaluations, put more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain form of life' (KSA 5 p. 17). The connection made here between truth and the human form of life, where truth is purely contingent upon the requirements of the human life form points towards Nietzsche's perspectivism, a theme I shall deal with later. For the moment, however, I shall discuss the question of language, metaphysics and Nihilism.

Nihilism

Turning away from the early essay on language, we can locate in Nietzsche's later writing the constant theme of language and metaphysics, and of the complicity of the two. The origins of that complicity lie in the Socratic search for definition. The Socratic search for definition can be regarded as the first philosophical project whose possibility is founded on the forgetting of the origin of concepts, of their metaphorical nature. The Socratic question 'what is?', whether an enquiry into ethics, epistemology or politics, is only purposeful given the assumption that its object is self-identical and unchanging with time, that correctly predicated properties are valid at all times, and that it has a determinable essence. Yet as Nietzsche notes, this basic law of identity 'here termed "originary" has become' (KSA 2 p. 39), i.e. it is the product of a particular history and nothing else.

Crucial terms such as 'a priori', 'a posteriori', 'origin', 'cause', 'condition', 'necessary', and many others constituting the discourse of metaphysics only function in this climate of forgetting, on condition of not revealing their utterly contingent status as regulative ideas (though not in the

Kantian sense). As such, they have to be an object of faith, and Nietzsche sees metaphysics and religion as closely related, indicated by the fact that he frequently refers to Christianity as 'Platonism for the People'. He notes, 'Some have the need for metaphysics; but that impetuous longing for certainty, which is released in large quantities scientifically and positivistically, the longing to have something stable . . . that too is the longing for security, support, in short, that *instinct of weakness* which admittedly does not create religions, metaphysics, convictions of all kinds - but conserves them' (KSA 3 pp. 581-2). One notes here, too, the continuation of the distinction between the process which constructed these systems of beliefs - the human ability to create metaphors in the early language essay, and the process whereby those systems are sustained - forgetfulness in the early essay, now defined as the instinct of weakness.

Metaphysics is thus characterised as a repression of history and of contingency, one sustained by a 'faith in the truth as something found' [die gefundene Wahrheit] (KSA 2 p. 31), rather than recognising its truths as governed by discourse inhabiting a world of signs [Zeichenwelt] (KSA 5 p. 36). It is an episteme which has provided the foundations for modern science and mathematics; as Nietzsche notes, mathematics 'would never have come into being if it had been known right from the start that there is no perfectly straight line in nature, no real circle, no absolute system of measurement' (KSA 2 p. 31). Instead, Nietzsche observes, it is the task of thinking to 'depict the human as a limit' (KSA 11: 25 [393] p. 115), to lay bare the semiotic construction of truth, for 'It is we alone who have devised cause, sequence [Nacheinander], reciprocity [Füreinander], relativity, constraint, number, law, freedom, motive and purpose' (KSA 5 p. 36).

It is this 'naturalisation' of the system of signs, where signs are no longer taken as signs but as revealed truths, which lays the ground for the arrival of Nihilism. Nietzsche, of course, is not the first to have realised the dangers of the misrecognition of the semiotic nature of truth, for it is a concern apparent in the work of Kant, too. The Preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and in particular those passages dealing with the origins of geometry, can serve as a starting point for any such reading of Kant.

Kant's account runs as follows: 'A light flashed in the mind of he who first demonstrated the isosceles triangle (call him Thales or anything else you want); for he found that he mustn't look into what he saw in the figure or in the bare concept of it, and then, as it were, read off [ablernen] its properties [Eigenschaften] from this, but rather bring out [hervorbringen] what he himself, following certain concepts, has a priori put into the figure [hineindachte] and represented (by means of construction), and that in order to know something for certain a priori, he must

ascribe [beilegen] nothing to the item except that which follows necessarily from what he has introduced into it in accordance with his concept.'¹²

The origin of geometry is to be found, then, for Kant, in the realisation of the *constructed* nature of the geometrical figure. The truth of geometry lies not in its uncovering of an always present objective truth, or in the correspondence of a judgement with its geometrical object, but instead in the exposition of figures whose character has already been determined by the expositor a priori. The key notion at play here is that of construction; the world of geometry which has always-already been constructed. The truths of geometry have already been pre-determined by the human impulse towards schematisation and typification.

It is a model which Kant extends to all the natural sciences and subsequently to knowing in the most general employment of the term such that philosophy in general becomes an enterprise in semiotics. In the celebrated passage from the Preface outlining the history of physics, Kant concludes that physics must seek to learn from nature 'in accordance with that which Reason introduces [hineinlegt - a term Nietzsche frequently uses] into Nature' (B xiii-xiv) and adds later that 'we can know a priori of things only what we ourselves put into them' (B xviii). Anticipating Nietzsche's assertion that natural science is 'cognition-of-humankind,' [Menschen-Kenntnis] (KSA 12: 2 [174] p. 154), i.e. an exercise in self-recognition through the representation of Nature, Kant claims that 'in a priori knowledge nothing can be ascribed to objects except what the thinking subject derives from itself' (B xxiii).

There is a case for arguing, then, a shared stance towards what Kant terms 'dogmatic metaphysics' and Nietzsche simply 'metaphysics', the character of which I have outlined earlier. Moreover both share a common awareness of the dangers involved, despite the fact that Nietzsche sees Kant as deeply implicated in metaphysical thinking. For Kant's Copernican turn is carried out as part of a strategy to counter the scepticism of Hume, who 'awoke' Kant from his 'dogmatic slumbers', while Nietzsche's linguistic critique of metaphysics forms part of his strategy to overcome Nihilism. I shall explore this parallel further.

Kant is aware of the consequences of taking the forms of representation to be more than just that, taking them to be the actual form of the Real, when he notes that 'if we ascribe objective reality to those forms of representation, we cannot prevent everything from being changed into mere appearance' (B 70), in other words to the scepticism of Hume, whose Empiricist scepticism refuses to grant any privilege to acts which synthesise the inchoate mass of sensation. Kant is here alluding to a problem he will later develop at greater length in his discussion of the antinomies, which shows how such a misunderstanding of the nature of representation can lead to the Humean position. For if we treat space and time, for

example, as realities, rather than as idealities, we will inevitably hit upon the paradoxes Kant elaborates in his discussion.¹³ If such aporiae are left as such, their lack of resolution will tempt one to dismiss all forms of representation as mere illusion, a position which will foster a paralysis of the mind. This, at least, is Kant's diagnosis of the psychology of such misrepresentation.

Nietzsche's concern is less with the specifically philosophical problems of such a position as with the wider cultural impact of such an ideology of the given.¹⁴ Guided by the structure of its language, metaphysics, as the philosophical expression of such an ideology, has rejected as unreal all that does not display the characteristics of its conceptual foundations, relegating it to the mere realm of illusion. Once again the origin can be located in Plato, who is the first to introduce the ontological dualism which has sustained metaphysics ever since. Although in some of his later works such as *Theaetetus* he shows less hostility towards the senses, the main metaphors which have motivated metaphysics are those of the cave and the divided line in *Republic*, the most graphic expressions of dualistic thinking. Consequently, Nietzsche notes, 'As long as there are philosophers on earth . . . there unquestionably exists a peculiar philosophers' irritation at and rancour against sensuality' (KSA 5 p. 350). For although Nietzsche is far from being an Empiricist, he is nevertheless aware of a gulf between the world demanded by conceptual thinking and that presented by the senses.

It is a problem he elaborates further in *Twilight of the Idols*, in the first aphorism of the section on ' "Reason" in Philosophy', and is worth quoting at length. He writes, 'Everything with which philosophers have worked for thousands of years consisted of conceptual mummies [one notes his continued use of the metaphor of mummification], nothing real left their hands alive. Whenever they pray, these gentleman servants of conceptual idols kill, they stuff - they endanger the life of everything when they pray. Death, change, old age just as much as procreation and growth are objections for them - even refutations. What is, does not become, what becomes, is not. . . Now they all believe, with desperation even, in the thing [an's *Seiende*]. Yet since they do not possess it, they search for reasons why they are denied it. "It must be an illusory appearance [*Schein*], a deception that we cannot perceive the thing [*das Seiende*]: where is the deceiver hiding?" - "we've got him" they cry out happily, "it's sensoriousness! These senses . . . they deceive us over the true world. . . The moral: Say no to everything which lends credence to the senses"' (KSA 6 pp. 74-5).

Rather than question the basis of what is taken to be true, e.g. the law of identity, the mutual exclusivity of Being and Becoming, the failure of sensory perception to meet the demands placed upon it by metaphysics leads to the derogation of the latter. Nietzsche explains the metaphysical denial of the sensory

world as resulting from a conflict between two incompatible modes of appropriation of the world. Nietzsche is not thereby claiming that the 'true' world is that of the senses, since truth is a function of language, he is merely claiming that the senses do not lie, which is a different sort of claim. In the following section he notes, ' "Reason" is the cause of our falsification of the testament of the senses. Insofar as the senses show Becoming, decay, change, they do not lie' (ibid. p. 75). Metaphysics refuses to concede such a point, for its system cannot see truth as a function of something else, and cannot admit the possibility of anything existing outside the limits of truth and falsehood, or that the criteria of truthfulness and falsehood are historically dynamic.

We see an example of this metaphysical inability in the thought of Nietzsche's contemporary Gottlob Frege. In his *Foundations of Arithmetic* of 1884, Frege admits to a problem which highlights the weakness pointed out by Nietzsche. In that work, Frege is forced to concede that while most propositions can be proven as true, there are also certain fundamental propositions which are true yet which cannot be proven in the same way. This phenomenon is for him a reflection of the structure of mathematical proof, for he notes that the 'aim of proof is, in fact, not merely to place the truth of a proposition beyond all doubt, but also to afford us insight into the dependence of truths upon one another,' adding that 'the further we pursue these enquiries the fewer become the primitive truths to which reduce everything'.¹⁵ These primitive truths are 'general laws, which . . . neither need nor admit of proof'¹⁶ which he then terms 'analytic' and 'a priori', mirroring Kant's distinction between the analytic and the synthetic. In his *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, written nine years later, he extends this observation to the laws of logic, writing 'Now the question why and with what right we acknowledge a law of logic to be true, logic can answer only by reducing it to other laws of logic. Where that is not possible, it can give no answer [muss sie die Antwort schuldig bleiben].'¹⁷

In essence, Frege is admitting that logic and mathematics are non-foundational; there are limits to mathematical and logical explanation. Yet what is significant for our purposes here is his response to the problem. For rejecting the Kantian thesis that would ground mathematics and geometry in intuition and criticising the psychologism of his contemporaries, he rather adopts a neo-Platonic position. In other words, the truths of mathematics, logic or geometry are not true because we construct them, because we say they are true. Indeed it is precisely through their being independent entities that they are true, and here Frege is drawing a distinction between appearance and reality. Now this may appear to be remarkably similar to the Kantian distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal. There is an important difference, however. Namely, Kant sees the

phenomenal as constituting the realm of truth, whereas, strictly speaking, the noumenal exceeds the limits of rational discourse. Frege's position is the mirror-image of this position, in that the laws of logic are true by virtue of their independence from human apprehension. We see an indication of this position in an explanation he gives of the objectivity of the sun in the unpublished *Logic* from the 1880's. He writes, 'Is not the sun for some people a beneficent or malignant deity, for others a shining disk hurled into the heavens from the East and rolling down again towards the West, for others yet an immense spherical white-hot body enveloped by a cloud of incandescent gases ? No. To one person it may *appear* one thing, to another, another: it *is* what it is.¹⁸ Although Nietzsche had no acquaintance with the work of Frege, within the context of the present discussion it is all too apparent that the Fregean response provides a singularly good example of the kind of 'weakness of will' which Nietzsche has identified as still operating in the putatively secularised and de-mythologised spheres of philosophy and science. A response which contrasts with, say those of Riemann, Poincaré or Gödel, whose solutions to the problem of validation in geometry are considerably closer to Nietzsche's in spirit.¹⁹

Condemning change and non-identity as signs of untruth, the path is clear for the construction of a supersensuous, supra-linguistic realm of true Being, which in religious practice takes on the character of some redemptive paradise and in its secularised form becomes the logical structure underlying the world, as in the case of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and Logical Positivism, or the noumenal realm of Kant's system, or indeed the sub-atomic structure of matter which physics has 'discovered'. All of these cultural phenomena sustain the same hope for redemption from the untruth of the apparent, despite the superficial conflict between religion and science.²⁰ The current popular belief that the mathematical regularities of particle physics can unlock the innermost secrets of nature testifies to this as do the final words of Stephen Hawking's popular *Brief History of Time*, which speculate on the possibility of physics coming to know the mind of God. Against this Nietzsche claims "The "apparent" world is the only one: the "true world" has been mendaciously added on' (KSA 6 p. 75). One notes his refusal to associate the 'world of appearance', i.e. that which has not been constructed by human conceptuality, with notions of truth: it is neither true nor false.

Modern science and philosophy have thus provided a secularised Christianity, in Nietzsche's eyes, where knowledge has taken over the redemptive function of divine forgiveness. In *The Dawn* he observes the fact that 'it was always presumed that human salvation [des Menschen Heil] must depend on insight into the origin of things' (KSA 3 p. 51), making this internal connection between theology and metaphysics explicit when he writes ' "Wherever the tree of

promise made on behalf of knowledge, and such a demand placed on knowledge, which create the conditions conducive to Nihilism.

The term 'Nihilism' was first coined by the Romantic philosopher Friedrich Jacobi, who employed it to denote those who had simply rejected the Christian faith. For Nietzsche, however, the term denotes something rather more complex than simple rejection, a phenomenon for which the above discussion serves as a genealogy. Going further than the mere identification of Nihilism with atheism, Nietzsche sees the roots of that rejection *in* Christianity (and hence in metaphysics too) itself. It is a reading which is expressed most dramatically in the thesis of the death of God, as presented in the parable of the madman in the third book of *The Gay Science*. In this famous parable, the madman, no doubt considered mad because his wisdom is excluded as proper 'knowledge' by the culture of scientific reason, not only proclaims the death of God, i.e. the loss in legitimacy of any transcendent values, but also locates responsibility for this death firmly in the hands of those who believed most firmly in God; 'We have killed him - you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving now? Where are we moving? . . . Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty nothing?' (KSA 3 p. 481).

Nihilism results from the promises held out by the metaphysics, which reveal themselves to be empty, to be unsustainable; to quote Nietzsche's well-known diagnosis 'the highest values devalue themselves' (KSA 12: 9 [35] p. 350). In a note from the Nachlaß of 1887 or 1888, Nietzsche writes, 'Nihilism as a psychological state is reached, second, when one has posited a totality, a systematisation, even an organisation in and beneath all events, such that the soul which thirsts after admiration and reverence wallows in the idea of some highest form of domination and administration' (KSA 13: 11 [99] p. 47). And the reason why this positing is an attainment of Nihilism is explained some years earlier in the aphorism from *The Dawn* quoted above. Nietzsche continues, 'The meaninglessness of the origin grows with our insight into the origin: while the nearest, that which is around us and in us gradually begins to show colours and beauties and enigmas and riches of meaning' (KSA 3 p. 52). The further we probe into the putative essence of things, the less we actually find, as was shown in the case of Frege, for whom there is no founding essence to the truths of mathematics or logic. Metaphysics is thus a self-undermining project, resulting in the conclusion that 'if some single standard is not good for everyone and for all time, then no standard is good for anyone at any time,' to borrow the words of Nehemas.²¹

that 'if some single standard is not good for everyone and for all time, then no standard is good for anyone at any time,' to borrow the words of Nehamas.²¹

Nietzsche wants to avoid such a conclusion, however. The failure of metaphysics, which promised true and timeless knowledge about the world, does not entitle one to reject every process of apprehension and comprehension. As he says in a note from the *Nachlaß* of 1886, 'The "meaninglessness of all that occurs": the belief therein is the consequence of an insight into the falsity of interpretations hitherto, a generalisation of despondency and weakness - no necessary belief. Presumption of the individual -: to deny sense wherever he does not see it!' (KSA 12: 2 [109] p. 114).

Such a response is characteristic of Humean scepticism, which Nietzsche would diagnose as a mark of weakness, borne of rage against the world for not fulfilling the expectation that it be meaningful. 'The philosophical Nihilist' Nietzsche writes 'is of the conviction that everything that occurs is meaningless and in vain; and that Being ought not be meaningless and in vain. But whence this: ought not?' (KSA 13: 11 [97] p. 45). This form of Nihilism, which Nietzsche variously terms passive or reactive, results from a residual attachment to metaphysics, a desire for what can never be, as becomes clear through Nietzsche's interpretation of Schopenhauer; 'Schopenhauer was still so much under the dominance of Christian values that once the thing in itself was no longer God for him, it had to be bad, stupid, absolutely reprehensible. He did not understand that there are infinite ways of being-other, even of being-God. Curse of that narrow-minded dualism: good and evil' (KSA 12: 9 [42] p. 355).

This is the cultural crisis Nietzsche is attempting to overcome; his project is not primarily a critique of metaphysics through an analysis of the semiotic nature of truth. Metaphysics will undermine itself and so save him the job. His project is rather to push through, past the passive Nihilism of Hume or Schopenhauer, on to an active Nihilism which cuts its remaining ties to metaphysics, one which fully absorbs the exposition of grammar dependent truth. The task is to establish how to become an active, or accomplished Nihilist [*il nichilista compiuto*], as Vattimo puts it.²²

Interpretation

We see in Nietzsche's account of Nihilism a strongly dialectical structure, inasmuch as its meaning is the consequence of a dialectic of history which has yet to be fully completed. Reactive or passive Nihilism must be negated by its other, namely active Nihilism; the former is 'only a transitional phase' (KSA 13: 11 [100] p. 50). Moreover in terms of content, too, we find a Hegelian structure organising Nietzsche's discourse on Nihilism. For passive Nihilism represents a pure

negativity, in terms of a feeling of complete meaninglessness accompanied by a state of inertia, of inactivity; Nietzsche regards Buddhism as the first historical expression of reactive Nihilism, and its themes of asceticism, of contemplative withdrawal from life are repeated in Christianity and metaphysics, most notably, of course, in Schopenhauer's ideal of the ascetic life. In contrast, however, Nietzsche views active Nihilism as a *determinate* negativity, one which has learned to overcome metaphysics by finding the right means. He attributes the continued presence of reactive Nihilism to the fact that 'the productive powers are not yet strong enough or that *décadence* is still hesitating and has not yet invented its remedies [Hilfsmittel]' (KSA 12: 9 [35] p. 351). Overcoming does not involve a mere moment of negativity, which amounts to mere passivity; active must also consist in the positing of *new* values, not just overturning the old ones. It is my contention that the notion of interpretation carries out precisely this function.

Until now I have deliberately skirted around the question of interpretation, but I shall now bring the notion back into play. For Nietzsche's idea of interpretation unites the reactive and active components of Nihilism. I have so far concentrated on Nietzsche's *critique* of metaphysics, concentrating in particular on his recognition of the derivative nature of truth. Bound up with this critique is his replacement of the ideas of knowledge and truth with that of interpretation, something I have not yet discussed. However, in addition interpretation also serves as a model for the establishment of those new values required to complete the Nihilist project. In other words interpretation provides for the possibility of a non-metaphysical normativity, for the establishment of an anti-foundational discourse which nevertheless creates a space for some form of normative framework.

Nietzsche's contention that all cognitive acts are merely interpretations is well known and has become the subject of a number of specialist studies.²³ What I am interested in is how the concept serves to provide some kind of post-metaphysical normativity. To understand more fully how it can do this, we have to address two central questions. First, what is being interpreted? In other words, if Nietzsche is going to abandon the correspondence theory of truth, how will he describe the relation between the interpreter and their object. What is the status of this object? Second, we must ask what criteria we might have for judging any interpretation. If we are to abandon the idea of truth, what is to prevent us from slipping into absolute relativism, granting equal value to all interpretations? Clearly Nietzsche does not remain a relativist in this sense, since he has very strong feelings as regards the value of metaphysics. I shall deal with each question in turn.

If we are to attribute some form of consistency to Nietzsche's writings (and this is not to be confused with systematicity), then on the basis of the above discussion we are going to have to distance ourselves from any interpretation which

sees Nietzsche as merely replacing the notion of knowledge with that of interpretation, while nevertheless still adhering to the metaphysical belief in a reality waiting to be interpreted, as if the metaphysical relation of subject and object remained undisturbed. Although Nietzsche frequently speaks of the privilege of Becoming and Life over Being²⁴, this does not entitle us to conclude that Becoming is the essence of existence, in the foundational sense of the Romantics, especially Friedrich Schlegel.²⁵ Yet it is a feature of his writing which has tempted many interpreters to read his work in this way. Most notably Heidegger was lured into putting Nietzsche at the culmination of metaphysics, understanding both will to power and Eternal Recurrence as expressions of a commitment to a particular ontology. More recently Figl, too, has regarded the use of Becoming over Being as one of mere substitution, with section headings such as 'Becoming as the foundational character of Being and Exegesis', 'Being as Becoming', 'Temporality as Structure of Being', and most significantly, 'Becoming - the Mode of Being [Seinsweise] of Quanta of Power.'²⁶

Plainly, such readings clash with the Nietzsche of this thesis, for whom Becoming is just as much a sign as is Being. Nietzsche's recurrent use of these terms, plus his use of others including 'falsehood', 'instinct', 'appearance' and others should rather be read as signs of his concern with establishing some normative interpretative framework through the mediation of a certain vocabulary which might facilitate avoiding the descent into reactive Nihilism we have already witnessed. Hence Kofman's reading which gives importance only to the figural language in Nietzsche which displaces the conceptual structure of metaphysical discourse, only accounts for half of the story. Were Nietzsche's writing so earnest in its efforts to elude the delusions of metaphysics, it would be difficult to explain Nietzsche's repeated employment of the same terms.

Alan Schrift has recently suggested that it actually makes no sense to ask what is interpreted, for the process of interpretation 'is not grounded in either the subject or the object; it exists in the *between*, in the space which separates them.'²⁷ In other words, the interpreting process is a web of relations, as Nietzsche himself says; 'If I remove all the relationships, all the properties, all the activities of a thing, the thing does not remain over; because thingness has only been invented by us' (KSA 12: 10 [202] p. 580). Yet Schrift's vocabulary still suggests the existence of subject and object between which there could be relation, and reminds us of the analogy drawn by Bernd Magnus between the world and the lost original of an ancient manuscript. The implication of Magnus's account would be that if we get the relationship right, we will then be in a position to restore the lost original.²⁸

Such accounts do not go far enough in stressing the constitutive role of interpretation. The web of relationships does not only exist in the space between

subject and object, it also *creates* that space, and creates the subject and object between which the space exists. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, Nietzsche asks, 'Why might not the world which concerns us be a fiction? And whoever then asks "but does an author belong to a fiction?" - might he not be answered back with: Why? Does not this "belong" belong to the fiction?' (KSA 5 p. 54). In other words the interpretative fiction which constitutes the world also constitutes the subject of interpretation, and it is in this sense that Nietzsche asserts 'One cannot ask "who is interpreting then?"' (KSA 12: 2 [151] p. 140). Interpretation represents a creative act, and in formulating the problem thus, Nietzsche is pushing to an extreme the model of 'knowing as making' implicit in Kant, stripping it of its residual metaphysical attachments, such as the transcendence of the representing subject and all the accompanying humanist trappings of Kant's moral theory.

We can see this view apparent in a Nachlaß note written just before that quoted above, where Nietzsche writes 'A thing would be described once all beings had asked "what is that?" and had their questions answered. Supposing one single creature, with its own relationships and perspectives for all things, were missing, then the thing would not yet be "defined"' (KSA 12: 2 [149] p. 140). I take Nietzsche to be asserting here, too, that the character of a thing is determined by the character of the beings interpreting, that its existence is dependent upon the interpreting beings and the uses they have for it. Yet this description does not amount to a 'definition' of the thing, and Nietzsche's use of quotation marks indicate the distance he wishes to retain towards this most Socratic of words. For the thing will always take on new characteristics according to the possibility of it being interpreted anew, hence there never can be some final, exhaustive definition. Yet as Alexander Nehamas argues, this is not to suggest merely that the world is a heterogeneous plenitude which our theories can never exhaust. Instead, Nehamas claims, 'Though the world is always "more" than our theories, this is only because there can always be more theories, not because its essential nature remains untouched.'²⁹

The mention of the idea of a plurality of theories introduces Nietzsche's perspectivism, and with it also touches the second question which I claimed requires asking. Namely, if interpretation constitutes the object, can we meaningfully speak of better or worse interpretations? Whence do we gather the criteria according to which we might judge competing or conflicting interpretations? In answering this question I shall be making my boldest claims as to the proximity of Hegel to Nietzsche. Above all, Nietzsche's grounding of the interpretative process in will to power imbues it with a Hegelian character; far from being a thinker of plurality, the affirmative thinker par excellence, Nietzsche's theory of interpretation, I am claiming, is one which affirms a dialectical

understanding of knowing. It is a claim which goes against much current Nietzsche interpretation, yet it is not an untenable one, and moreover one which is central to Nietzsche's re-assertion of some form of normativity after the crisis in legitimacy of the discourse of metaphysics.

Nietzsche's mature theory of interpretation, inasmuch as it can be considered a full-blown theory, represents a widening and a deepening of the early, linguistic critique of knowledge carried out in 'On Truth and Falsehood'. Nietzsche has not abandoned the notion of grammar-functional truth conditions so much as supplemented it with perspectivism.³⁰ Truth is now no longer a function of merely of language so much of the human perspective in general, in other words, it is a function of all those aspects, be they linguistic, psychological or even physiological, which distinguish the human form of life from other forms, for example that of the bat, to use Nagel's well-known case. In *The Dawn*, for example, he writes 'My eye, as strong or weak as it may be, can only encompass a certain portion [Stück], and within this portion I weave and live . . . we spiders are in our web, and whatever we catch in it, we catch nothing unless it allows itself to be caught in our web' (KSA 3 p. 110), having already stated baldly in *Human All-too human* some years earlier that 'It is true that there might be a metaphysical world; we can hardly dispute its absolute possibility. We see all things through the human head and cannot cut this head off; though the question remains what would there still be of the world, if we did cut it off' (KSA 2 p. 29). We see Nietzsche here qualifying what initially seems an acceptance of the existence of a possible autonomous object of knowledge with doubts as to that autonomy and speculation on the dependence of this metaphysical world on the human perspective. It is a position which is maintained, indeed fortified throughout his career, resulting in bold assertions such as the following from 1887 that 'We belong to the character of the world, there is no doubt' (KSA 12: 1 [89] p. 33).

In this regard, one of the important innovations in Nietzsche's thought is to deprive the conscious subject of its transcendent role in the process of interpretation. Interpretation is not merely a function of consciousness, but also one of instinct, of the body. I do not wish to examine this topic in great depth at present, since that will be the task of the next chapter, yet it is important to observe that when Zarathustra says 'Behind your thoughts and feelings stands . . . an unknown sage - he is called Self. He lives in your body, he is your body', adding that 'There is more reason in your body than in your greatest wisdom' (KSA 4 p. 40), he is accomplishing two things.

First, he is challenging the privilege accorded to the conscious intellect in the metaphysical tradition from Plato onwards. Secondly he is allowing for the possibility of intentional activity taking place in spheres where it has traditionally

been denied. We see this move taking place early in Nietzsche's work, in aphorism 18 of *Human All-too human*. Here he writes, 'For the plant all things are usually still, eternal, every thing is identical to itself. From the period of lower organisms humans have inherited the belief that there exist identical things' (KSA 2 p. 39). Later in the same aphorism he adds that 'the belief in unconditional substances and in identical things is a similarly primary, similarly ancient mistake of all that is organic' (ibid. p. 40). It is an atavistic argument which reminds us of his later claim that 'Philosophising is a kind of atavism of the highest order' (KSA 5 p. 34).

Nietzsche's attribution of intentional activity to all forms of organic life allows him to introduce the notion of interpretation as will to power as a coherent thesis explaining interpretative activity. Clearly his view of interpretation as a process which both exceeds and constitutes the human representing subject means that one cannot possibly construe the idea of interpretation as will to power as an anthropocentric doctrine, as does Kaufmann, for example.³¹ Yet although we can confidently assert what interpretation as will to power is not, it is much more difficult to assert what it is.

The problem of the will to power still remains highly ambiguous. Obviously Nietzsche cannot intend, as Heidegger believes, that the will to power be taken as '*what* a being as such is, namely, what it is in its constitution.'³² The problem of the will to power is rendered more complex by the fact that in Nietzsche's published works there are only two references to it, while his unpublished notes which refer to it seem more speculative in character than anything else. Moreover Karl Schlechta has shown the 'work' entitled *Will to Power* to be an arbitrary collection of notes, involving considerable editorial violence to Nietzsche's note books.

If Nietzsche did have plans for a comprehensive final work, they remained at a very embryonic stage. In his notebooks from 1887 and 1888 there are numerous 'plans' for the 'Will to Power' most of which singularly fail to harmonise with each other. Hence it is difficult to treat the will to power as a fully articulated doctrine. Rather, it has the character of a large number of often contradictory and uncoordinated ideas and jottings which lurk in the background to much his work, both published and unpublished, without being fully worked out. A good example of the difficulty in discussing the 'doctrine' of the will to power can be seen in a passage from the Spring of 1888 included in the text of *The Will to Power* (§ 689). Nietzsche writes of 'The will to the accumulation of power as peculiar to the phenomenon of life . . . could we not accept this will as the motivating force in Chemistry too? and in the cosmic order?' (KSA 13: 14 [81] p. 261). By the end of the passage the reader is quite unsure how to interpret the will to power. Is it a feature of organic life, as Nietzsche seems to be at first suggesting,

or is it a more basic ontological constitutive feature of all matter ? Nietzsche leaves the question open, ending instead with a number of unanswered questions. In proposing the following brief interpretation of what will to power might mean, I shall pursue a line broadly similar to that of Müller-Lauter in his essay 'Nietzsches Lehre vom Willen zur Macht'³³, though I shall relate it to the specific theme of interpretation as I have already developed it.

The first habit we must rid ourselves of, according to Müller-Lauter, is that of referring to *the* will to power, as if Nietzsche were some ontological monist. Admittedly, in his early works clearly written under the influence of Schopenhauer, he does speak of *the* will in such terms. However this precedes by some years the development of his speculative ideas on will to power. The grounds for the above assertion are several. The first derives from Nietzsche's own statement that all notions of unity as the irreducible Being of beings are illusory, in the sense that numbers are themselves useful fictions. Significantly, while will to power represents a striving to increase the quantum of power, Nietzsche tends to prefer quality to quantity as a determining factor in his interpretative strategy. This inclination forms one of the main reasons for his critique of mechanistic world views. For example in 1886 he writes, 'mechanistic conception: desires nothing but quantities: but power lies in quality: mechanism can only describe processes, not explain them' (KSA 12: 2 [76] p. 96), while later that year he comments that 'we cannot help experiencing quantitative differences as something fundamentally different from quantity, namely as qualities' (KSA 12: 6 [14] p. 238).

The second ground for dismissing ideas of *the* will to power is that Nietzsche rarely speaks of it in those terms. He writes of will to power, wills to power, but seldom of *the* will to power. Will to power seems to be a determinable quality inhabiting and directing all life processes, but this is far from claiming it to be the metaphysical essence of the world in a Schopenhauerian sense. Is Nietzsche maintaining that all life processes are engaged in a ceaseless struggle for domination of the Other ? Not exactly, since will to power manifests itself rather less obviously, which might also explain why it has been so misrecognised. To understand how it manifests itself one has to return to Nietzsche's idea discussed above that knowledge, or in Nietzsche's terms, interpretation, is power. This is not to make a Foucauldian point that certain forms of knowledge are formed merely by the demands of various power groups, even though Nietzsche's genealogical analyses of the terms 'good' and 'bad' do unmask the power interests informing Western morality. It is rather the much simpler claim that knowledge enables so much manipulation and use of the environment.

An eminent example would be the 'knowledge' of Classical physics. Although political interests have determined the direction of much research in

physics, the basic point still remains valid, that Classical physics itself allows a certain degree of control over the flux of reality. Nietzsche himself acknowledges that while it is an interpretation and not an explanation, physics nevertheless has its uses, and is moreover necessary in making the world comprehensible and manipulable for its human inhabitants. While Nietzsche was not in a position to have been able to predict the change in paradigm which physics has undergone in the twentieth century, his initial premise still pertains. Far from being the 'final answer', the new physics is just another interpretative paradigm with its own set of problems, indeed has indeterminacy built in to it in the shape of, for example, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. Despite this incompleteness, most obvious in the stubborn refusal of the results of research into Quantum Mechanics to harmonise with those of Relativity, twentieth century physics nevertheless facilitates a greater degree of manipulation of the environment than did the Classical, Newtonian paradigm, a difference symbolised potently in the capabilities of the atom bomb. As Nietzsche says, 'In truth interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something' (KSA 12: 2 [148] p. 140). This simple equation between power and knowledge avoids any suggestion of a metaphysical substrate which Heidegger and Jaspers, amongst others, attribute to Nietzsche. There need be no power interest above and beyond its particular manifestation in a form of knowledge.

In his doctrine of will to power one need not see Nietzsche as making any grandiose claims concerning the essence of things. It is a much more low level theory concerning a certain trait of all organic life forms. It could be seen as running thus: forms of life have the need for a 'home', an environment in which they can live, an environment they can control. This control can be achieved through an interpretative process whereby the aggregate of elements which constitute the world can be ordered and arranged in a way suited to the mental and biological needs of the particular organism. Hence the reason why interpretation is so perspectival. This is not to turn will to power into a psychological theory, as Kaufmann, and more recently Maudemarie Clark have done.³⁴ For one could argue that all psychological drives are secondary to the process of interpretation constituting that which those very drives desire. Will to power, as Müller-Lauter presents it is rather merely an interpretation of interpretation, of the function and extent of interpretation, rather than of any process which might be antecedent to the interpreted world.

While Nietzsche is not prepared to grant the world some positive identity, he is certain that the metaphysical interpretation of the world as a stable unchanging object is a narrow one. Using the paradigm of textual interpretation, Nietzsche notes 'The same text permits countless interpretations: there is no "correct" inter-

pretation' (KSA 12: 1 [120] p. 39). I am not thereby repeating the reading of Nehemas, who emphasises to an extreme that equation made by Nietzsche between the world and the literary text, for there is an important difference. To equate the world with a text would in itself be imposing a certain determinacy of meaning on the world, which Nietzsche would oppose, and also gainsay his claim that, strictly speaking, one cannot say that the world *is* anything as I have shown above. More importantly one might cast doubt on the idea that Nietzsche is actually interested in what the world actually consists of. Nietzsche's interest is not so much in the results of interpretation than with the *activity* of interpretation itself.

Nietzsche's equation of power and interpretation does, however, render Deleuze's reading slightly problematic. Deleuze writes, 'The will to power is the element from which derive both the quantitative difference of related forces and the quality that devolves into each force in this relation,'³⁵ concluding that since will to power is what determines difference, we have to see radical plurality as lying at the foundation of Nietzsche's thinking, which constitutes a critique of the totalising impulse of the dialectic. Yet will to power only determines difference in order to overcome it, will to power is 'will to accumulation of power' (KSA 13: 14 [81] p. 261). Admittedly Nietzsche does write of the 'Principle of life' as 'greater complexity, sharp differentiation' (KSA 12: 7 [9] p. 297), yet this is qualified in the same note with the observation that 'there is a will to power in the organic process by virtue of which dominant shaping commanding forces continually extend the sphere of their power and within this always simplify' (ibid.). It is a view we see repeated in many of the Nachlaß notes of the later years, such as the following from 1888, claiming that 'The degree of resistance and the degree of superior power - that is the question in every event' (KSA 13: 14 [79] p. 257). Will to power as simplification, will to power as negation; the contiguity of the two gives the idea of 'difference' in Nietzsche's thinking a different function from that which Deleuze would accord it.

Dialectics

So where does the discussion leave us regarding Nietzsche's quest for post-metaphysical normativity? I would argue that the equation of power and interpretation offers interpretation-immanent criteria for judging the worth of individual interpretations. For if we translate the notion of will to power as will to more power into the language of interpretation and perspectivism, the character of interpretation is always one of wanting to interpret more, in a constant expansion of perspectives. Nietzsche's call is for a practice which, in the vocabulary of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, engages in the dialectic of the individual and the

general, accounting for as many affects as possible, able to submit to frequent self-overcoming in order to constantly widen the scope of perspectives. It is a constant and rigorous self-questioning vigilance, which refuses to rest content with its achievements.³⁶

Nietzsche comments in *Genealogy of Morals* on this self-overcoming thus: 'Precisely because we seek knowledge, let us not be ungrateful to such resolute reversals of customary perspectives and values . . . to see differently . . . to want to see differently is no small cultivation and preparation of the intellect for its "objectivity" - the latter not to be understood as disinterested contemplation . . . but rather as the ability to control and dispose of one's Pro's and Con's, such that one can employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge' (KSA 5 pp. 364-5). Certainly Nietzsche's aim to establish an objective knowledge, no matter how provisional that objectivity may be, is difficult to reconcile with a reading which turns him into the great parodist of his own discourse. There are admittedly only perspectival interpretations in the sense that no individual possesses the divine eye with which to oversee the domain of absolute truth. To this extent Karsten Harries is correct when he contrasts Nietzsche's metaphor of the voyager at sea, uncertain of his or her destination, with Kant's notion of the philosopher as the surveyor of the clearly demarcated territory of human cognition, or again points out Nietzsche's preference for Don Quixote, wandering apparently aimlessly across the Iberian landscape, with Odysseus whose sole endeavour is to reach the final and certain destination.³⁷

Such bold metaphors, however, do not entitle us to claim that Nietzsche abandons all pretensions to knowing. They surely indicate rather the provisional nature of any such knowing, with an awareness that further researches might extend the direction of thinking to hitherto unexpected regions. Certainly there are moments where Nietzsche is aware of the paradoxical status of his own claims concerning the 'truth' of Life and knowledge. However these self-mocking remarks do not detract from the far more serious project which gives his work its driving force. Nietzsche's own thought cannot pretend, under the terms of his own argument, to be the 'truth'. Yet it can pretend to offer a more complete and therefore *better* interpretation of Life than the 'metaphysical' one. 'The power of knowledge lies not in its degree of truth, but in . . . its character as a condition of life' states Nietzsche (KSA 3 p. 469), and the more control a specific form of knowledge achieves the more life-enhancing it is, the nearer it comes to the never to be reached goal of absolute control. It is a constant process of reappraisal, though without the assured goal of Absolute Knowledge. Seen in such light one can account too for Nietzsche's hostility to Darwin. Will to power, properly speaking,

is will to more power, a never-ending process which is the diametrical opposite of Darwin's instinct for self-preservation.³⁸

By casting Nietzsche's theory of interpretation in this light I am deliberately emphasising the similarities between the expansion of perspectives and the Hegelian dialectic. Yet the emphasis is far from being illegitimate. For although Hegel reserves the right to closure, and indeed each moment of the dialectic constitutes a necessary step towards Absolute Knowledge, the parallel between the function of negation in Hegel and in Nietzsche is striking.³⁹ For negation in Hegel is the means to overcome one-sidedness, just as in Nietzsche, the project of interpretation is to overcome the narrowness of prior perspectives. Nietzsche ridicules the metaphysical ideal of a perspectiveless knowledge, and likewise Hegel claims that 'Being, pure being, without any further determination . . . is in fact nothing, and neither more nor less than nothing.'⁴⁰ For Nietzsche, although the perspective functions as a negativity, i.e. as a limitation which renders obsolete the metaphysical ideal of pure knowledge, it is also that which facilitates interpretation. With perspectivism there can be no knowledge; without perspectives there can be no interpretations. It is a position fully permeated by the spirit of Hegel, where negation is that which rescues Being from pure nothingness. 'If' as Hegel says 'on the other hand, reality is taken in its determinateness, then since it essentially contains the moment of the negative, the sum-total of all realities becomes just as much a sum-total of all negations, the sum-total of all contradictions.'⁴¹

We can see the proximity of their positions in Nietzsche's well-known assertion in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that 'There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective knowing' (KSA 5 p 365). Taken out of context, the passage might seem to demonstrate just the contrary, namely that the cumulative workings of the dialectic are quite alien to Nietzsche's thinking. However, a full translation of the passage in question runs as follows: 'There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective knowing, and the more affects we allow to speak about an object, the more eyes, different eyes we know to employ for the same thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity" be'. One sees here an endorsement of some form of objective understanding, some form of normativity by which judgements can be made. Yet it is not one which appeals to some order of things antecedent and exterior to the discourse of interpretation, but rather grounds the interpretative criteria in the demands of the particular form of life interpreting.

With this it becomes quite clearer why Nietzsche views metaphysics and its concomitant ascetic ideal scornfully. Metaphysics and the ascetic ideal are devoted to an exclusion of the body and all sensuous existence. As Nietzsche says in the Preface to *The Gay Science* all philosophy hitherto has been a misunderstanding of the body. Yet this is not merely an interpretative error, based on a one-sided,

perspectival view of life. It is an act of self-annihilation. The greater part of interpretation is guided and motivated by physiological demands, while asceticism seeks to deny its own origins. Nietzsche writes, 'The unconscious masking of physiological needs under the cloak of the objective, the ideal, the purely-spiritual extends to shocking proportions' (KSA 3 p. 348). It represents a tuning of the forces of life against themselves. This is the paradox of asceticism: the ascetic 'priest', motivated by his own will to power, his own will to promote his particular form of existence, turns will to power against itself. 'For an ascetic life is a self-contradiction: here there rules a resentment without equal, that of an insatiable instinct and will to power, which would like to become master not over something in life, but over life itself, over its deepest, most potent and basic conditions; here the attempt is made to use force in order to block up the well-springs of force' (KSA 5 p. 363).

On the basis of such passages it is difficult to accept wholeheartedly Kofman's contention that asceticism is 'affirmative; negative ideals affirm the being which evaluates,'⁴² nor for that matter Nehemas' view that the ascetic priest is negatively evaluated by Nietzsche because he strives to impose his ideal on others.⁴³ While Nietzsche might, at places, admire the strength and discipline of the ascetic (e.g. his highly ambivalent attitude towards both Socrates and Christ as the ascetic types *par excellence*) he still regards the ascetic type as a dangerous creature *per se*, regardless of his effect on others, merely by virtue of the fact that all his life-sustaining and enhancing energies have been turned inward upon themselves. The drive to impose a stable meaning on the world, uncontaminated by the impurities of the sensuous aspects of life itself, is revealed by Nietzsche for what it is, ultimately self-undermining and life-denying. Life interpreting life against itself. It is an interpretation which necessarily leads to Nihilism, by devaluing life and offering a transparently mendacious 'ideal' alternative, whether that alternative is true knowledge or paradisiacal redemption. When these alternatives are shown to be empty, the disenchanted have nothing left to which they can turn.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have offered an analysis of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics and Western culture which hinges on the notion of interpretation. Interpretation performs two tasks in Nietzsche's thinking. First, it functions as a weapon against the metaphysical idea of knowledge. Both Nietzsche's early writing on language and his later perspectivism can be gathered together under the theme of interpretation, which serves to counter both correspondence notions of truth, and also the idea of objective (i.e. perspectiveless) knowledge.

However, interpretation also functions as a positivity, supplementing the purely negative moment of Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical polemic. For the notion of interpretation serves to overcome the threat of Nihilism which is ever present, if we are left solely with the demolition of metaphysics. As we have seen, passive Nihilism arises when all the structures of meaning which have supported the prevailing episteme bring themselves down, without being able to offer any alternative. In other words the lack of the certainties of metaphysics becomes the lack of anything, sheer nothingness which threatens to plunge metaphysical culture into a state of supine paralysis. Nietzsche is hoping to push through the turn to Nihilism to its final end, namely active Nihilism where the individual can take on responsibility for making meaning in the world. However this does not signify a complete absence of restraint, a complete freedom to do what one will, and here the notion of interpretation comes back into play. Interpretation, supplanting knowledge, is nevertheless guided by criteria, following a certain set of perspectives. Although it avoids the illusions of metaphysics, interpretation is still structured, and hence I am arguing that it is with interpretation that Nietzsche is trying to re-establish some form of normativity after the death of metaphysics. This is not to take normative as denoting a purely ethical set of imperatives, but rather as that which has a certain structure, yet a structure which is not doggedly bound to its present state.

It is with the notion of interpretation as offering a post-metaphysical normativity for the production of meaning that Nietzsche hopes to overturn passive Nihilism. Yet the paradigm of interpretation, as Nietzsche formulates it, is not one which will necessarily lead to dogmatism or metaphysics, despite the restrictions Nietzsche will place on the desire for complete freedom. For it is part of the logic of interpretation, as will to power, that we should not allow ourselves to become attached to any particular perspectives. Interpretation is a constant process of dissolution and reconstruction; as soon as any particular perspective has been invested with interpretative authority it must be dissolved and replaced with a better one. Nietzsche is asking us to undertake the near impossible, i.e. to simultaneously affirm and disown our interpretations, to seek to undermine every perspective we have formed at its very moment of formation. It is the difficulty of this task which leads him to conclude that the human must give way to the overhuman, or the *Übermensch*. For the need for stability and permanence, a need which has given rise to metaphysics, is a function of the human form of life, and ultimately Nietzsche is suggesting that if we wish to avoid passive Nihilism and debilitating *Kulturpessimismus* we will have change our whole mode of being. As I shall be arguing in later chapters, it is the artist who, for Nietzsche points the way towards

this new form of life, whose form of life can encompass both the negation and affirmation demanded by the notion of interpretation.

Notes;

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, hrsg. G. Colli & M. Montinari (Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag / Walter de Gruyter 1980) Vol 12: 2 [149]. All subsequent references will be to this edition, which will be referred to as KSA, followed by the volume number.

² If Nietzsche's critique were focused on the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* he might be more justified, for in that edition Kant writes (A 249) that 'the concept of appearances . . . establishes the objective reality of noumena'. In the second edition of 1787 (B), however, he deletes the passage, replacing it with a lengthy discussion on the nature of the noumenon as itself a construct of human thought, in order to make sense of the notion of phenomena. See B 306 ff.

³ See, for example, Bernard Pautrat, *Versions du Soleil* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche et la Métaphore* (Paris: Payot, 1972) and Jacques Derrida, *Spurs. Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. B. Harlow, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), first published in 1978. Part of Kofman's book has been translated in David Allison (ed.) *The New Nietzsche* (New York: Delta Books, 1977) pp. 201-214.

⁴ G. P. Baker & P. M. S. Hacker, *Language, Sense and Nonsense* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) p. 18.

⁵ Josef Simon, 'Grammatik und Wahrheit', in Jörg Salaquarda (hrsg.) *Nietzsche* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980) pp. 187-9.

⁶ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, hrsg. M. Frank, (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977) p. 167. For an exhaustive account of Schleiermacher's 'linguistic turn' see Manfred Frank's *Das Individuelle - Allgemeine* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977).

⁷ Kofman, op. cit.

⁸ Kofman also indicates the extent to which Nietzsche attempts to avoid this process of petrification in his own work by employing a constantly shifting range of metaphors, such as those of the bee, the spider, the tree and the fortress to describe the production of meaning. I would temper her assertions with the observation that Nietzsche also coins a new, post-metaphysical vocabulary, where certain terms such as Becoming [Werden], Life [Leben], Interpretation [Auslegung] and Falsehood [Lüge] are privileged, consequently recurring throughout his writings. This conflict could be interpreted as a recognition on Nietzsche's part, of the necessity to employ a finite vocabulary to make any meaningful statements, while at the same time also being aware of the dangers of this repeated use of the same terms. This is a theme I discuss later in the main text.

⁹ On these shared characteristics of the thinking of John Searle and Jacques Derrida, see Manfred Frank's essay 'Die Entropie der Sprache' in his book *Das Sagbare und das Unsagbare* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980) pp. 141-210.

¹⁰Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, trans. J. Snyder (London: Polity Press, 1988), and also 'Nihilism: Reactive and Active' in Tom Darby, Béla Egyed & Ben Jones (eds.), *Nietzsche and the Rhetoric of Nihilism* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1989).

¹¹See Stanley Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). Fish's main claim is that any meaningful discourse has to relate to those practices and beliefs already maintained, from which he concludes that theoretical discourse has the choice of either assenting to what is already believed, or dissenting and consequently not being understood. For a powerful critique of Fish's argument see Christopher Norris' essay 'Right you are (if you think so): Stanley Fish and the Rhetoric of Assent' in Norris, *What's Wrong with Postmodernism* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990).

¹²*Critique of Pure Reason*, B xi-xii.

¹³Cf. *ibid.* B 432 - 595.

¹⁴When writing about Nietzsche one has to be wary about the use of the notion of ideology, which of course cannot be set against some 'true' representation of the Real. Mark Warren has suggested ways in which it might be meaningful to talk in terms of a Nietzschean theory of ideology. See Warren, 'Nietzsche's Concept of Ideology', *Theory and Society*, 13 (1984).

¹⁵See Gottlob Frege, *Foundations of Arithmetic*, trans. J. Austin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1950) § 2.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, § 3.

¹⁷Gottlob Frege, *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966) vol. I p. xvii.

¹⁸Gottlob Frege, *Posthumous Writings*, ed. P. Long and R. White (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) p. 7.

¹⁹The main issue occupying Riemann, Poincaré and others such as Gauss, Lobatchevski or Helmholtz was the impossibility of proving Euclid's fifth Axiom concerning parallel lines. For a concise account of the problem of the grounding of geometry from Kant onwards see Matthias Schirn, 'Kants Theorie der geometrischen Erkenntnis und die nichteuclidische Geometrie' in *Kant-Studien* 82 (1991). Although Gödel regarded himself as a Realist, I mention him here because his famous sixth proposition represents a strong response to the problem identified by Frege, i.e. the inability of any formal system to provide its own foundation from within. Gödel sums up his theorem thus, criticising the assumption that 'axioms and rules of inference are . . . sufficient to decide *all* mathematical questions which can be in any way at all expressed formally in the systems concerned. It is shown below that this is not the case . . . there are in fact relatively simple problems in the theory of ordinary whole numbers which cannot be decided from the axioms'. Cf. Kurt Gödel, *On Formally Undecidable Propositions of Principia Mathematica and Related Systems*, trans. B. Meltzer (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962) pp. 37-8.

²⁰The myth that science (specifically technology) and theology represent mutually exclusive values is one that Heidegger, and more recently Vattimo, have been at pains to discredit. Vattimo writes, 'Even technology is a fable or *Sage*, a transmitted message: when seen in this light it is stripped of all its (imaginary) claims to be able to constitute a new "strong" reality that could be taken as self-evident' (*The End of Modernity*, p. 29). Significantly, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, despite its relentless reduction of meaning to logic, maintains a similar attachment to theology through the notion of the mystical. See *Tractatus* § 6.522; 'There are indeed things that cannot be put into words [Unaussprechliches] . . . They are what is mystical [das Mystische].'

²¹Nehemas, op. cit. p. 71.

²²See Vattimo, 'An Apology for Nihilism' in *The End of Modernity* pp. 19-30.

²³See, for example, Alan Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Alexander Nehemas, op. cit.; Günter Abel, *Nietzsche. Die Dynamik der Willen zur Macht und die ewige Wiederkehr* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984); Johann Figl, *Interpretation als Philosophisches Prinzip* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982).

²⁴See, for example, KSA 2 p. 387, or KSA 3 473.

²⁵See Schlegel's Jena and Cologne Lectures of 1804-5, in vol. XII of the *Friedrich Schlegel Kritische Ausgabe* hrsg. E. Behler, (Paderborn: Schöningh Verlag, 1967), especially pp. 37 ff and pp. 391 ff. For a concise account of Schlegel's replacement of Being by Becoming as foundation see Leonard Wessell, 'The Antinomic Structure of Friedrich Schlegel's Romanticism' in *Studies in Romanticism*, 12 (1973).

²⁶Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* ed. D. Krell, et al. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), vols. II & III. Figl, op. cit., pp. 73 ff.

²⁷Schrift, op. cit., p. 191.

²⁸Bernd Magnus, *Nietzsche's Existential Imperative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

²⁹Nehemas, 'Immanent and Transcendent Perspectivism', *Nietzsche Studien* 12 (1983) pp. 486-7.

³⁰Critics such as Paul de Man consider language the key to Nietzsche's critique. See de Man, 'Nietzsche's Theory of Rhetoric', *Symposium* 28 (1974). In contrast, I would argue that language, while important in the early writings, later constitutes only one of various weapons in the struggle to displace metaphysics.

³¹Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). Kaufmann writes, 'Nietzsche's central concern is with man, and power is to him above all a state of human being' (p. 420).

³²Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. III, p. 212.

³³*Nietzsche Studien* 3 (1974).

³⁴See Kaufmann, op. cit.; Maudemarie Clark, 'Nietzsche's Doctrine of the Will to power,' *Nietzsche Studien* 12 (1983).

³⁵Deleuze, op. cit., p. 50.

³⁶On the relation of Nietzsche's thinking to the hermeneutic tradition from Schleiermacher onwards see Nicholas Davey, 'Nietzsche's Aesthetics and the Question of Hermeneutic Interpretation,' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 26 (1986).

³⁷'The Philosopher at Sea' in Michael A. Gillespie & Tracy Strong (eds.), *Nietzsche's New Seas*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1988) pp. 33 ff.

³⁸See, for example, KSA 13: 11 [121] & 14 [122-3]. See also Günter Abel's article 'Nietzsche contra Selbsterhaltung. Steigerung der Macht und Ewige Wiederkehr' in *Nietzsche Studien* 10/11 (1981/2).

³⁹As Josef Simon notes, the difference between Nietzsche and Enlightenment thinkers is that whereas all share a recognition of the historicity of knowledge, Nietzsche thereby affirms the process of enlightenment without end, i.e. the activity itself, whereas other thinkers such as Kant and Hegel see humanity as being on the path towards some goal of complete enlightened being. Simon, 'Aufklärung im Denken Nietzsches' in Jochen Schmidt (hrsg.), *Aufklärung und Gegenauflklärung in der europäischen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989).

⁴⁰Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 82.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 113.

⁴²Kofman, op. cit., p. 187.

⁴³Nehamas, op. cit., pp. 123-5.

Nietzsche's Subject: Retrieving the Repressed

In the first chapter I argued that interpretations of Nietzsche have tended to overlay the purely sceptical moment in Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics at the expense of his reconstructive theory of interpretation. Critics of a variety of persuasions have tended to dichotomise the issues at stake within his work, as if it merely revolves around an opposition between rationality and irrationality. Some, most especially those in the Marxist tradition, see Nietzsche's apparent embrace of irrationality as cause for especial concern. Habermas in his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* considers the relationship between the rather shabby involvement of Heidegger in Nazism and his philosophy, with the looming figure of Nietzsche in the background, as more than a merely external one. Discussing the 'Kehre,' for example, Habermas writes, 'It is only after this turn that fascism, like Nietzsche's philosophy, belongs to the objectively ambiguous phase of the overcoming of metaphysics.'¹ At the other end of the spectrum thinkers such as Bataille, Deleuze, Kofman and Derrida have received Nietzsche with a sense of exhilaration, as a figure who can provide a mechanism of release from the tyranny of the rational and logical world order and open it up to the aesthetic free play of the metaphor. Yet as I have already indicated, a rejection of metaphysics, combined with an emphasis on the perspectival nature of cognition and the aesthetic *aspects* of the human relation to the world, does not necessarily oblige us to abandon any and every quest for normativity, replacing it with, say, Baudrillard's endless procession of simulacra or the absolutely unlimited free play of *différance*. The infinite dialectic of interpretative will to power, while implicitly aiming at the *ideal* of objective truth, offers a paradigm which displays an awareness of the epistemological pitfalls so often ignored by metaphysics, but which also avoids a descent into the abyss of absolute relativism.

One of the key areas where Nietzsche challenges the supremacy of metaphysical discourse is in that of the subject. For if the idea of a transcendent representing subject can be shown to be at least misguided, then the basis of all forms of rational knowledge is severely shaken. So far I have not devoted much attention to Nietzsche's 'destruction' of the subject and it is now time to make good this neglect. The issue is important in as much as Nietzsche's critique of the subject has been a powerful influence on subsequent philosophy, especially on post-structuralist thinking. This is most apparent in the case of the anti-humanism of Foucault or of Deleuze and Guattari, but perhaps too, though rather less directly, it exercises an influence on Derrida's own deconstruction of subjectivity. Additionally, though, a

clear view of Nietzsche's critique of subjectivity is necessary in order adequately to understand the importance of art to Nietzsche. As Andrew Bowie has reminded us recently, we are not faced with a choice of either subjectivity or an aesthetics of existence. Rather, the two are interdependent in a most intimate and binding way.² For philosophical modernity, characterised by the death of God, i.e. the loss of an objective order of things previously guaranteed by onto-theology, throws the subject into the abyss of a meaningless universe. Following the tradition of German philosophy from Kant onwards, it falls to art to fill the space left by God, either as a means of concealing this meaninglessness or as a model of realising the newly found freedom from metaphysical restraint. We see this inter-relatedness of problems in Nietzsche's treatment of the question of art, inasmuch as equal attention is paid to art and artists, the latter as a specific manifestation of the free spirit or *Übermensch*. As I shall be arguing in later chapters the artist, for Nietzsche, maintains a crucial relation to the world and towards his own mode of interpretative activity. Indeed it is this distinctive relation which defines the artist qua artist and art qua art.

Critique

Nietzsche's critique of the subject has informed contemporary thought in two areas. The first is his insistence on the primacy of language as I have outlined in the previous chapter. In both *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Twilight of the Idols* he argues for the determination of thought by language, resulting in his now famous exclamation 'I fear we shall never be rid of God because we believe in grammar' (KSA 6 p. 78). Elsewhere he gives the problem of language and consciousness an anthropological emphasis, claiming that 'the development of language and the development of consciousness . . . go hand in hand' (KSA 3 592). Moreover this dependence of thought on language is not something which can be discarded; it is an inbuilt part of the human perspective on the world. One might change one's language, but, as he comments in *Beyond Good and Evil* ³, this is to substitute the inherent perspectivism of one language for that of another.⁴ The belief in subjectivity, shaped by the grammatical structure and syntax peculiar to the Indo-European languages would be replaced by a prejudice determined by the syntactical formations of, say, the Semitic languages, or to use Nietzsche's own example, the Uralic-Altaic family of languages. Both of these arguments, namely that language is a determinant of thought and that it is additionally a scheme which cannot be thrown off, find themselves strongly echoed in the writing of Derrida, albeit with an admixture of Heidegger and Saussurean linguistics. Derrida writes, for example,

that 'the subject becomes a *speaking* subject only in its commerce with the system of linguistic differences . . . But can one not conceive of a presence . . . of the subject before speech or signs ? . . . Such a question therefore supposes that prior of the sign and outside it, excluding any traces and any *différance*, something like conscious is possible.'⁵ In a further passage following that just cited he also informs us that for strategic reasons he would regard consciousness 'as a "determination", as an "effect".'⁶ In *Speech and Phenomena* his book-length study of Husserl's work on signification, he concludes that all acts of self-consciousness are always-already mediated by the (linguistic) sign, which he sees as constituting subjectivity itself. The subject is no longer the author of meaning, but rather inserted into the order of language, to such an extent that the individual has nothing to contribute to the general play of semiotic difference. Additionally the prejudices which language has bequeathed to us, the assumptions implicit in metaphysical concepts cannot simply be dismantled; unlike Nietzsche, Derrida goes still further, to announce the impossibility of criticising metaphysics from the outside, with a vocabulary uncontaminated by the patterns of metaphysical thinking; 'There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language - no syntax and no lexicon - which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest.'⁷ The historicity of our being requires that all criticism occur from within the closure of metaphysics. At this point one should be careful not to overemphasise the connection between Nietzsche and Derrida in the critique of the subject. On the whole Nietzsche's importance to the French philosopher is far more apparent in his deconstruction of rational epistemology, in his placing of knowledge 'sous rature', yet that notwithstanding, it is clear that a first, superficial, reading of Nietzsche's critique of subjectivity bears a marked resemblance to Derrida's work.

However, while Nietzsche may be a background influence on Derrida's critique of subjectivity, in the case of Foucault, he is omnipresent. We are reminded of this most startlingly in the latter's *The Order of Things*, where amidst the normally dispassionate prose of Foucault there suddenly appears an extraordinary paean to his German predecessor. Foucault's archaeology of knowledge is modelled closely on the former's genealogical studies, and more specifically his ontological history of the subject is derived to a large extent from Nietzsche's remarks on subjectivity. For not only does Nietzsche suggest that subjectivity is an effect of language, he also contends in numerous places that the whole notion of the subject

may be a fiction, borne out of the desire to posit an agent for an action, a claim I shall be examining later.⁸

It is one of Nietzsche's arguments that belief in the subject arose partly out of a misinterpretation of the syntax of Indo-European languages, out of the assumption that the personal pronoun represented a real entity rather than merely serving a grammatical function. He notes in the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* that 'There is no "being" beneath doing, affecting, becoming; "the doer" is fictitiously added on to the doing, - the doing is everything' (KSA 5 p. 279), a view perpetuated in unpublished notes such as the following one from 1888: 'Subject, object, a doer added to the doing, the doing separated from what it does: let us not forget that this is mere semiotics and nothing real' (KSA 13: 14[79] p. 258).

On the basis of such general statements, which I shall examine in more detail shortly, Foucault develops a history of the 'subject', mapping out the various historical interpretations of subjectivity. Subjectivity, he informs us, is not a given, but rather the product of specific historical discursive formations. As he notes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the aim of archaeology is 'to substitute for the enigmatic treasure of "things" anterior to discourse, the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse . . . by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse . . .'⁹ Here Foucault is of course giving a fuller exposition of the position implicit in Nietzsche's less well developed theory of interpretation, whereby the objects of interpretation are constituted by the web of interpretative discourse which apprehends them.

In the latter work Foucault is discussing archaeological technique in the most general manner. However the indebtedness of his thinking to Nietzsche becomes most clear in essays such as "What is an Author?" where he reveals the notion of authorship, ie. of subjective agency, as having been created by the discourse of a certain ideology. It is the ideology which will restrict the proliferation of meaning by binding textual significance to the intentional productivity of the author. As Foucault notes 'the author does not precede the works, he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes and chooses; in short one impedes the free circulation . . . of fiction.'¹⁰ In his later work, more specifically in the *History of Sexuality* Foucault directs his attention solely to the problem of the subject, its self-constitution and self-relation or 'rapport - à - soi'. Once again though, the various ideas of subjecthood which he traces from Ancient Greece to Early Christianity do not represent a series of interpretations of an anterior entity, to use his own terms. Instead they offer a series of fictive creations and recreations. The first, introductory, volume of the history of sexuality consists of a genealogy

of subjectivity, whereby the earlier priority of group identity gradually yields ground to the formation of a domain of private experience, symbolised, in a view which curiously mirrors Hegel's *Aesthetics*, by the shift from the Ancients' preference for the epic narrative to an increasing emphasis on a literature of introspection. Moreover the dominance of this new paradigm of identity has had such a profound effect on us that it has shaped our behaviour, made most notably manifest in the urge to confess which for Foucault is so characteristic of modern culture. Crucial to the development of the notion of the self is the nature of one's relationship to oneself, which also forms the axiom of any ethical code. Ethics is founded not on moral codes per se, for these moral codes are themselves dependent on a particular concept of the moral agent, which in turn constitutes itself by reference to the prescriptive elements of any moral code. Here we are reminded by Nietzsche's own assertion in *Twilight of the Idols* that the form of metaphysical subjectivity has been determined as a correlate to Christian morality, with its parallel notions of free will and sin.

However, although Foucault would deny the givenness of any form of subjectivity, his philosophy of the subject is nevertheless involved in a self-contradiction, as Deborah Cook has recently indicated.¹¹ For while the content of any particular subjectivity is dependent on a historically specific reflexive self-constitution, the ability to exercise a self-reflexive movement appears to be a trans-historical phenomenon, forming the conditions of the possibility of any concept of moral subjectivity. But on this admission one is obliged to enquire as to what it is that can exercise variety of historically and linguistically mediated rapports - à - soi. It seems that by Foucault's own argument there must be an a priori ontological foundation, namely the very capacity to exercise a rapport à soi, the existence of which he attempts to deny. Instead he sees this a priori possibility for self-reflection as a mere medium, as the locus of 'games of truth', devoid itself of any ethical relevance. Yet such an answer will simply not do. One cannot simply shrug off such an internal inconsistency, most especially since Foucault's own aim to liberate subjectivity from a particularly repressive mode of self-reflection can only be made comprehensible on the basis of a distinction between true and false relations to the self.

This brief excursus on Foucault serves to demonstrate that a critique of the metaphysical subject does not necessarily entitle us to espouse its total negation, the death of the subject. Decentering the subject, i.e. depriving it of its former privilege of being the transcendent source of knowledge, does not imply dissolving the subject. The inconsistencies which inhere in Foucault's work suggest that we must approach the problem more carefully, with a greater degree of circumspection than Foucault himself. In particular I would argue that Nietzsche's critique of subjectiv-

ity does not consist in an assault on the concept of selfhood per se, but rather on a specific, oppressive conception of selfhood, one whose character is marked by notions of substance, unity and autonomy. The parallels with his critique of metaphysical thought in general are quite clear.

First, Nietzsche's sceptical stance does not necessarily lead to an embrace of absolute irrationality, but rather to an interpretative position which displays awareness of the pitfalls of 'knowledge'. So too the demolition of the metaphysical subject is succeeded by a reinterpretation of selfhood based on the interpretative strategy formulated in the first chapter. Second, Nietzsche's critique of the mind / body dualism is evidently a specific case of his wider critique of the ontological dualism so characteristic of metaphysics in general.

As a prelude to a study of Nietzsche's concept of the self, one must first analyse what he imagines he is attacking. Strictly speaking, the idea of 'the' metaphysical subject is an absurdity. Even metaphysics has never sustained a single unified subject as such. Rather, there has always been a plurality of subjects according to the function they have to serve. The 'subject' of metaphysics itself thus represents an interpretative fiction, synthesising the various subjects, e.g. political, legal, ethical, knowing and so forth, which all have delimited spheres of applicability. Tracing the tradition back to its genesis in Plato, there is already a plural subject, inasmuch as Plato draws a clear distinction between the subject of knowing and the subject of feeling. What I am arguing, then, is that it is not particularly helpful to generalise and speak of Nietzsche's critique of subjectivity per se. Instead, I am claiming that he is criticising the metaphysical concept of the representing subject and its cousin, the ethical subject, focusing on a Cartesian notion of the self, with its concomitant distinction between the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*.

The subject of knowledge in Descartes is nothing but the *res cogitans*. As he says in the second *Meditation* 'therefore I am only . . . a something that thinks, that is to say a spirit, an understanding.'¹² In the sixth *Meditation*, devoted to demonstrating the 'real distinction between the human soul and body', he makes an even bolder assertion when he notes that 'there is a great difference between the spirit and the body, in that the body is by its nature always divisible, while the spirit is entirely indivisible.'¹³ The lineage of such a concept of subjectivity can be traced back to the Asceticism of the Church Fathers and Augustine in particular, but Nietzsche singles out Descartes and Kant as being the most recent and most prominent exponents of such a concept. The connection between the metaphysical subject of knowing and Christianity is far from being accidental, since Christian morality must be predicated on the assumption of a responsible agent, one whose

moral disposition will be purely rational, unclouded by the physiological demands of post-lapsarian human embodied existence. As Peter Brown has shown¹⁴, the early church invested the notions of sexual abstinence and renunciation of the body with a cosmic significance far exceeding the contemporary pagan norm of restricting sexual activity to marital relations for often practical reasons only. In many ways this corporeal renunciation is a deepening and an extending of the old Greek maxim γνῶθι σεαυτόν, 'know thyself', which stood above the entrance to the oracle at Delphi, and Nietzsche must attempt to demonstrate the misguided nature of such an ethical ideal and its accompanying concept of agency. As he notes: 'Humans were conceived of as "free" so they could be judged and punished - so they could become guilty: consequently every action had to be conceived of as intended, the origin of every action had to be thought of as residing in consciousness' (KSA 6 p. 95).

These few opening remarks are meant to suggest that Nietzsche is targeting in particular the autonomous subject of morality and its foundation in the pure *res cogitans* of Descartes, the concept of which relies on two axiomatic principles. First, that the intellect can be protected from the ravages of the bodily affects and achieve a high degree of self-knowledge, and second, that the subject can exercise autonomy in its choice of moral action, a principle brought to its extreme expression in Kant's categorical imperative. The contents of the last chapter will have already made clear the nature of some of Nietzsche's objections to the metaphysical subject. Not only is the status of truth dependent on the semiotic order of language, but in addition the conscious intellect is only one part of the functioning human organism (and ultimately of interpretative will to power). Thus the exhortation to 'know thyself' is shown to rest on very uncertain foundations. In *Daybreak* Nietzsche devotes a long section to the problem of the indeterminacy which inhabits any account of agency: 'The unknown world of the "subject". What is so difficult for people to grasp is their lack of knowledge of themselves . . . Is this not precisely the dreadful truth: that what one can ever know of an action will never suffice to cross the bridge which leads from a cognition to the action ? . . . Moral actions are always something other' (KSA 3 p. 108-9). The phenomenal inner world, which Schopenhauer had used as the starting point of his own critique of Kant, itself turns out to be a complex of different affects of various orders, irreducible to any simple relation of willing and acting. In the *Gay Science* he mocks those who would see the intellect as the essence of humankind, commenting that 'Consciousness is the most recent and latest development of organic being and hence also the most unready and feeble' (KSA 3 p. 382). Zarathustra puts the case more poetically when he declares to his audience that 'You have taken the path from the worm

to the human being, and much of you is still worm. You were once apes, and the human is even now more of an ape than some apes' (KSA 4 p. 14).

Nietzsche's particular scorn is reserved for the idea of free will, derived from the ascetic ideal. Free will must be an a priori possibility of the ethical subject, yet as Nietzsche demonstrates the will may not be a primary force, but rather a secondary quality which arises from the interpretation of a specific situation 'so that volition can arise one must have a representation of desire and repulsion. Secondly: that a powerful stimulus can be felt as a desire or repulsion, that is a matter of the interpreting intellect, which works for the most part unbeknownst to us' (KSA 3 p. 483). The intellect, as a secondary function of organic life, is inextricably linked to those organic functions of the body; seen in this light, the mind - body dualism of Descartes appears to be hopelessly naive. This is not to reduce the mind to the status of an organ, for such a crude reductionist materialism would be just as culpable as the ascetic ideal of severing the intellect from the life forces which give it its vitality. However we are forced to reassess the relationship between mind and body, in a manner which perhaps suspends the traditional opposition itself.

Even in his earliest notes Nietzsche stresses the impossibility of neatly delineating between mental and bodily functions. In an unpublished note from 1871 Nietzsche writes 'What we call feelings are . . . already permeated and saturated with conscious and unconscious ideas' (KSA 7 12[1] p. 364). Mental acts cannot be reduced to mere neuro-physiological activity, to the cathexis of so much energy; the mind cannot be seen as a bundle of nerve endings and nothing besides. For just as mental functions can be seen to originate in physiological impulses, so too neural stimuli have to be interpreted by an intellect in order to be recognised *as such*. It is moreover only the interpretative act that can give these stimuli the *quality* of mental processes. Perception of the colour green can be seen, within the vocabulary of behavioural psychology and physics as a reception of light waves of a particular frequency, and this account does explain the physical, biological and neurological mechanics of vision. However, we do not 'see' light waves, we see green objects, and it is this peculiar quality of greenness that the scientific account cannot explain. Yet at the same time, one cannot neatly distinguish between the physiological and the phenomenological aspects of seeing green objects, as if an autonomous inner self could 'choose' to interpret external stimuli in a certain way. On these grounds alone Nietzsche finds Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* risible, as if one could isolate the workings of some pure rational essence, as if one could abstract the mental from the material aspects of existence. This realisation is also proclaimed by Zarathustra, that 'Behind your thoughts and feelings stands . . . an unknown sage -

he is called Self. He lives in your body, he is your body', adding that 'There is more reason in your body than in your greatest wisdom' (KSA 4 p. 40).

In addition to the impracticality of the Delphic command to know oneself, the ideal of ethical autonomy is further undermined by the facticity of the human existential condition. No individual has control over the environment in which they find themselves, indeed they find a world which is always-already there, which has shaped the way they are, to such an extent that the notions of guilt and responsibility so central to Christian ethics and concepts of the soul seem to be irrelevant and misplaced. 'Nobody is responsible for the fact that they are even there' states Nietzsche (KSA 6 p. 96), adding that the peculiar characteristics of one's existence owe more to contingency than to any sense of necessary order, denoting the complete absence of any foundational or external telos which might give a purpose to an individual human existence. On the basis of an overview of Nietzsche's oeuvre, we see the general target of his discourse to be not subjectivity per se, which I shall henceforth term Selfhood, but the ascetic transcendent Subject of knowledge which underlies the Socratic ethical ideal, the metaphysical tradition and Christian morality. With this understanding of Nietzsche in hand, the task is now to produce an account of his reconstruction of the self.

Reconstruction

The first aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy of the self to take into account is that he regards the self, or consciousness as a given. This might seem a somewhat startling claim, given my previous emphasis on Nietzsche's critique of the 'ideology' of the given. What I mean by this, however, is merely that one has to distinguish between the process whereby consciousness was constituted and its present status. Quite clearly, consciousness is not something which was 'discovered'; Nietzsche's account of its genesis by the primal violence at the root of social morality makes this clear. Yet at the same time the consequences of that act have left a permanent trace, and one cannot simply reverse the process which has led to the present. It is this view which makes possible the ideal of the *Übermensch*, who represents an authentic self-relation, and it is this view which marks Nietzsche off from the writings of Foucault.

Such an interpretation of Nietzsche might seem additionally surprising since much scholarship would tend towards a more Foucauldian position. Michel Haar, for example, though not being as vigorously anti-subjectivist as Foucault nevertheless interprets Nietzsche as seeing the individual self as a fiction, in that the self finds its meaning, its identity, in the social group, which gives it roles to play,

identities to adopt. He writes that 'A role constitutes the matrix of the individual. It provides a text which is not written by "me", whose authors are the others, whose words are learnt by my body.'¹⁵ Obviously Haar bases his interpretation partly on Nietzsche's own analysis in the *Gay Science* (§ 354), which sees self-consciousness as arising out of the need for communication within the community. However once again, the circumstances of its genesis and its present function are not necessarily the same thing. Indeed there are strong reasons for assuming that the two should not be conflated, for the notion of the self as a 'fiction' should alert us to the double meaning of the word, denoting something which is a product of the *imagination* and also something which is a *product* of the imagination. Moreover Nietzsche's genealogical method performs its central task by demonstrating the variety of meanings which have been attached to a cultural praxis, precisely to show that the present meaning of a particular praxis cannot be reduced to all earlier meanings. So too with self-consciousness, its original meaning has not been ossified and preserved up to the present but rather transformed, and this is the heart of the problem. Its multifarious origins have given it a complexity which has subsequently expanded its range of possibilities. Additionally, Haar's reading of Nietzsche fails to account for the *Übermensch* in his struggle for 'heroic individualism', as one recent book terms it.¹⁶ The *Übermensch* represents a form of individual existence, which must be bought, if necessary, by suffering, by long periods of solitude, as the example of Zarathustra suggests. This is far indeed from the interpretation in Haar of the free spirit, who gladly accepts the multiple roles bestowed upon him by the commonality, turning it from a burdensome obligation he has to fulfil to a pure joy in plurivocity.

Nietzsche offers several different explanations as to the origin of the self, none of which are incompatible, but which highlight the very complex nature of the self. In the *Genealogy of Morals* he offers the well known account of the deepening of inner consciousness through the turning of energies hitherto directed at the external environment back onto themselves: in a move which anticipates Foucault, though differing from him in crucial ways, Nietzsche sees the origin of self-consciousness in a reflexive movement, in a relation to the self. As Nietzsche says 'The whole inner world, originally thin as if stretched between two membranes, extended and expanded, acquired depth, breadth and height in the same measure as outward discharge was inhibited' (KSA 5 p. 332). However, one must again comment, as in the case of Foucault, that this self-relation, this turning of self against self is only possible on the basis of a pre-existent and primitive capacity for a relation to self, which provides the ontological ground of all subsequent and secondary transformations, such as the development of self-consciousness. Niet-

zsche's account is less one of the birth of consciousness per se than of the birth of modern self-consciousness out of a more primitive form of consciousness, which latter, of course has already been constituted by a variety of organic and communicative needs. Unlike Foucault, Nietzsche recognises this problem. In the *Gay Science* he notes that while self-reflexive activity is determined by thought, and to that extent is part of the public sphere which Haar so emphasises, there is also a more primordial layer of mental activity which precedes linguistic articulation. That form of consciousness whose entire energies are turned inward on themselves, is a very secondary form of mental being. He notes, 'To say it once more: the human being, like every thinking creature, is always thinking, but doesn't know it; thinking of which one becomes conscious is only the slightest part of it, let us say: the most superficial, the worst part: - for only this conscious thinking occurs in words, that is to say, in communicative signs, whereby the origin of consciousness covers itself up' (KSA 3 p. 592). Nietzsche is trying to uncover a layer of indeterminate, primordial Selfhood which precedes all the effects which subsequent constitutive processes such as insertion into the symbolic order of metaphysical language and moral judgement have had. As we shall see, though, in overcoming the metaphysical subject of knowing and of morality, the *Übermensch* cannot simply return to this putative primordial state; self-consciousness is a fact that must be accepted and cannot be circumvented, however neither is it the only aspect of the self.

The brief account of the pre-linguistic aspects of the self brings us to a further constitutive element of Selfhood, namely the physiological affect of the human body. Consciousness arises as a function of the organic as was already noted above, and not only has this bequeathed to consciousness a permanent disposition towards the world, it also still determines the course of much thought and interpretation, as I demonstrated in the first chapter. Indulging in his predilection for atavism, Nietzsche notes that 'For the plant all things are usually still, eternal, every thing self-identical. From this period of lower organic being humans have inherited the belief that there are identical things' (KSA 2 p. 39). Yet by stressing this I am far from implying there to be a biological essence to Selfhood, for as Nietzsche himself remarks, not even biological functions, not even instincts, should be considered as unchanging and permanent entities. Though their importance to much thinking remains fairly constant (and even this cannot be guaranteed as an eternal 'truth' of humankind), their content and form are highly variable.

Nietzsche's various analyses of the functions and origins of consciousness also serve to clarify why Nietzsche rejects the notion of the self as a simple unity. The fact that the self has grown up out of a wide variety of heterogeneous elements, the fact that it still fulfils many roles and that it is composed of many layers, make it

difficult to see it as a unified, simple *res cogitans*. In *Beyond Good and Evil* we are given a very precise account of the new attitude towards the self, which involves not a dispensing with the whole concept, but instead a reassessment of it: 'Between us, it is not at all necessary to be rid of the "soul" itself and to do without one the oldest and most respectable hypotheses . . . However the road to new concepts and refinements of the hypothesis of the soul remains open: and notions such as "mortal soul" and "soul as plurality of subjects" and "soul as social structure of drives and affects" want to have their rights within science' (KSA 5 p. 27). As I suggested in the first chapter, the perspective view of the human is not only a result of his / her individual interpretation of the world, but also internally, the self is composed of a variety of drives and affects which offer competing and conflicting interpretations of the experiential continuum. One observes here, too, how according to the criteria of better and worse judgements, Nietzsche's own interpretation of the self is better, inasmuch as it is one based a wider set of perspectives than that of metaphysics.

At this point one might feel entitled to object that Nietzsche is just repeating a theory of the soul which has seen wide currency in earlier thinkers. From Plato onwards, there has been an awareness that the soul is not a simple unity. In the *Republic*, Plato recognised the existence of three elements, each being in competition with the others for domination. For this very reason Plato recommended a strict education and training for the philosopher-kings precisely so that the rational element of their soul might gain mastery over the others, or to use his striking metaphor from the *Phaedrus*, so that it might become the charioteer of the soul. Similarly Kant's account of the subject does not permit us to speak of the self as a monad, indeed any notion of unity is merely a synthetic one brought about by an object of cognition. The response to such an objection would have to be that whereas Plato and Kant both offer a clearly compartmentalised and neatly divided self, Nietzsche's self is a much more haphazard, chaotic phenomenon. Whereas Kant's representing subject (though not the noumenal subject, which is far more problematic) is a plurality of cognitive functions, brought into synthetic unity by the cognitive act, Nietzsche's self is a collection of cognitive *and* physiological elements, which have developed at different times in response to different needs. In contrast to Plato, Nietzsche rejects the ideal of reason governing the soul, partly because reason and rational thought are themselves dependent on other traits, lacking autonomy, and partly because the Platonic Ideal is built on self-deception, on a refusal to recognise the importance of all its constituent elements. It is to deny the fluid and dynamic nature of the self, whose elements are arranging themselves in ever varying configurations according to the circumstance. The self is not some permanent

substance, not even a plural substance, for we inhabit a world of Becoming, and this Becoming affects the make-up of our Selves.

Curiously enough, Nietzsche's anti-essentialist attitude with regard to the self bears a resemblance to Wittgenstein's critique of notions of the 'essential' self or the 'substantial' self in his later writings, though one might regard the latter as going still further in his critique. Thinking, for Wittgenstein, is not a mental state which can somehow be separated from one's active relation towards objects and the world in general. As he notes: 'Of course we cannot separate his thinking from his activity. For the thinking is not an accompaniment of the work any more than of thoughtful speech.'¹⁷ Consciousness is thus a complex web of interrelated emotional and cognitive dispositions to habitual ways of acting in the world. In his *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein compares language to the confused layout of an old city, seeing it as 'a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods'¹⁸ a metaphor which has been taken up by Nehamas and Amélie Rorty to describe the self.¹⁹ Wittgenstein's use of the word 'maze' should remind us of Nietzsche, who displayed a penchant for the conceptually similar metaphor of the labyrinth. Consciousness is not some static, a priori determined substance, but rather grows in accordance with the actions we perform, and of course this parallels Nietzsche's insistence on the artificial nature of the separation of the agent from the act. Naturally one cannot posit a direct link between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, that would be absurd, but one can see in their philosophies an alternative to the Cartesian cogito which does not simply resort to the denial of any mode of consciousness whatsoever. As Charles Altieri suggests²⁰, the scepticism which denies subjectivity per se, is but the reverse side of the essentialist argument. It is an argument which anticipates Peter Dews' more general critique of the post-structuralist anti-Humanist turn, which posits in the place of the Humanist subject something which happens to have the same characteristics. We have seen this apparent in the work of Foucault, whose initial anti-humanism turns out to be self-defeating since it requires what it seeks to deny, namely a subject that can exercise self-reflection. Similarly, Derrida rejects any notion of a spontaneous ego, replacing it with the concepts of *écriture* and *différance*, which just happen to have exactly the same characteristic as the spontaneous subject. Derrida refuses to allow speakers the privilege of intending any meaning at all, while allowing language the ability to indulge in precisely this play with signification. The paradigm of Derrida fails in many ways to move away from the problems of Idealism and Husserlian Phenomenology, a shortcoming which has been given its due prominence recently²¹. In contrast, Nietzsche's positing of Selfhood as a given does not involve him in an inconsistency. He need

not be regarded as reinstating essentialism by the back door. The self is a given inasmuch as it has been constituted by the web of contingent relations produced by interpretative will to power. Hence it does not have any necessary essence which might be said to somehow exist independent of the interpretative process of which it is the result. Nevertheless this web of relations is our world, and the self is equally enmeshed within that web of relations and fulfills specific functions in that web. It is as real as is the interpretative fabric of the world.

Yet if Nietzsche views the subject as a confused multiplicity, lacking any a priori centre or any single regulating principle, how are we to understand his call for a return to authentic selfhood? What does Nietzsche mean when he gives *Ecce Homo* the subtitle *How one becomes what one is*? What is this 'what' which one is? Is Nietzsche just being inconsistent? How can one become oneself, given that there is no essential self to become, or to which one can return? Nietzsche's own response to the question hardly clarifies the issue. He comments that 'To become what one is, one must not have the slightest inkling of what one is . . . where nosce te ipsum would be the recipe for disaster, self-forgetting, self-misunderstanding . . . becomes Reason itself' (KSA 6 p. 293). Evidently becoming oneself cannot derive its force from the Delphic command to 'know thyself', which Nietzsche here quotes in Latin. In contrast to the restrictive self-knowledge of Delphi, becoming what one is consists in recognising oneself as interpreter, and as interpretee, what Nietzsche calls self-overcoming. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's answer to the nineteenth century Bildungsroman, the goal is not self-knowledge in order to have an understanding of one's limits. The self-knowledge of Wilhelm Meister is replaced by the self-overcoming of Nietzsche's hero. 'Human being is something that must be overcome' is the prophetic cry of Zarathustra (KSA 4 p. 44), and with this cry we are brought back to the endless dialectic of interpretation.

The dialectic of the hermeneutic process must of necessity always be incomplete: it always harbours the possibility of its own self-overcoming as I demonstrated in the first chapter. Individual interpretations can never be fully subsumed under the more general inter-subjective interpretation, and moreover there is always the potential for new individual interpretations. Hence the ideal 'objective' interpretation will harmonise as many individual perspectives as possible. Becoming what one is means precisely this; an interpretative understanding of oneself, whose one-sidedness is revealed at the moment of its articulation. Will to power motivating interpretation always desires more, always desires more complete interpretations, the revelation of greater possibilities. The interpretation of the self, the recognition of oneself as always already interpreting and interpreted, is not a discovering of one's limits; it is an expansion of those limits. Hence we are restored to the ideal which

Nietzsche had already expounded in his genealogical study of asceticism: it is the ideal of allowing as many of the affects to speak out as possible. In the case of the self, it is to give the affects their proper place in the society of the soul rather than deny their very existence, as in Descartes, or admit their existence but use oppressive violence against them as in Plato or the Church Fathers.

Having reached this stage of the argument, one might object that Nietzsche's politics of the soul, dialectically opposed as they are to those of Plato, would force us to read him in a manner similar to Deleuze, whose interpretation I have already taken great pains to refute. Certainly Nietzsche's reservations about the idea of a unified subject, together with Zarathustra's more general polemic against the 'One' seem to imply a radical pluralism and substantiate this possible objection. However, an argument of this kind is largely informed by a one-sided understanding of Nietzsche's self. The self in Nietzsche can already be seen as a range of non-specified potentialities, which can become actualities if the interpretative act allows them to do so. For we have already seen the range of processes which have contributed to the genesis of the self and given it certain characteristics which the ascesis of metaphysics seeks to deny, or at least repress. Hence self-interpretation is also a mode of self-creation.

Yet interpretation is also mastery, and consequently self-interpretation is also self-mastery, though a self-mastery of a quite different order than the self-subjugation of the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche envisages a control over the affects which nevertheless does not deprive them of their vitality. In the summer of 1888 he writes: 'Mastery over the passions, not a weakening or a rotting of them. The greater the will's power of mastery becomes, the more freedom can be given to the passions. The great human is great through the room for play of his desires: however he is strong enough to make these wild animals into pets' (KSA 13: 16 [7] p. 495). The *Übermensch*, as the ideal self-interpreting, self-creating being, is an aristocracy of the affects: there is order without subjugation, a sense of purpose without the imposition of a restrictive goal. The affects must be orchestrated so as to maximise their potential, while will to power recognises the necessity of a permanent readiness to change their configuration, in order to expand still further the horizon of possible action and control over the environment. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche offers an account of his own ideal of self-creation which mirrors precisely the reading I have given above when he writes 'For the task of a revaluation of all values perhaps more capacities were necessary than have ever been together in one individual, above all contrary capacities too, without allowing them to disturb and destroy each other. Hierarchy among these capacities; distance; the art of separating without creating enmity; to mix nothing; to reconcile nothing; a monstrous multi-

plicity which is nevertheless the opposite of chaos; this was the precondition, the long secret work and artistry of my instinct' (KSA 6 p. 294). Once again in this passage one can see a reflection the process of the interpretative dialectic; competing capacities must be brought into some kind of order, yet into an order which does not rob them of their particularity, much as in interpretation individual perspectives must be allowed to maximise the general range of perspectives, while without being allowed to tyrannise the others.

The Nietzsche of Deleuze, the affirmer of pure difference, takes a further blow upon examination of Nietzsche's politics of the soul, and his particular objections to Modern man. Bruce Detwiler has recently brought to prominence the extent to which Nietzsche's anti-democratic political views have been whitewashed or conveniently circumvented since the apologia performed by Kaufmann rehabilitated Nietzsche as a respectable thinker.²² One need only consult *Twilight of the Idols* to gain a clear impression of his contempt for the democratic egalitarian ideal. Liberal institutions, he notes, are a form of decadence as soon as they appear. Freedom is not something which should be guaranteed in order to produce an environment free of tension. The only freedom worth having is that which has been fought for, and the greater the resistance to be overcome, the greater the value of the freedom achieved. Nietzsche writes in *Twilight of the Idols* : 'My concept of freedom. The value of a thing lies not in what one can achieve with it, but in what one has paid for it, - what it costs us. I shall give an example. Liberal institutions . . . undermine the will to power, they are the levelling of mountain and valley given moral legitimacy . . . with them the herd animal always triumphs' (KSA 6 p. 139-40). Nietzsche's politics are especially important for his account of the Übermensch and his criticism of the decadence of Modernity.

As I have demonstrated above, allowing the affects to 'speak' does not imply an abandoning of oneself to the passions. There must also be an ordering of the passions, to promote the existence of the Übermensch, to increase his / her power. Otherwise a lack of direction results in so much wasted force. This lack of restraint, this pure affirmativity had been seen early on by Nietzsche as one of the main weaknesses of modern culture. Already in 'Homer's Competition' the fifth of his *Five Prefaces to Unwritten Books* which he had presented to Cosima Wagner in 1872, he had compared and contrasted Greek culture with that of his own time. The central feature whereby one could distinguish the two was, in his eyes, the lack in modern culture of a determinate negativity. One can flesh out in concrete terms the meaning of this strikingly Hegelian sentiment as follows.

The guiding force of all Greek culture, seen most clearly in the Homeric poems, was the desire to compete; Greek culture was founded on strife, competition,

the aim to excell. The Greek word for virtue, arete, had the sense of excellence, rather than the humility associated with Christian ideas of moral virtue. The scorn of Homer is reserved not for evil doers, but for Thersites, for being weak, for lacking the aristocratic status which would signify his supremacy over others, becoming also the object of ridicule. So too the performance of tragedies was not executed merely for its own sake, but as part of a competition in honour of Dionysus. Even the Platonic dialogues were written, according to Nietzsche, out of this desire to do better than the rest, to show Socrates arguing with greater eloquence than the Sophists and making them appear foolish, even if the ostensible aim of the dialectic was to gain knowledge by mutual consent. As Nietzsche says 'From childhood onwards every Greek found in himself a burning desire to be a tool for the health of his own city in the battles between cities: therein was his ambition kindled, and therein was it reined in and restrained. Therefore individuals were freer in Antiquity, because their goals were nearer and more palpable' (KSA 1 p. 790). The Greek affirmation of life was possible only on the basis of a determinate negation, a theme which Nietzsche retains up until his last work, exemplified by his comment in *Ecce Homo* that 'negation and destruction are conditions of affirmation' (KSA 6 p. 368) and his hopes that the destruction wrought by present-day Nihilism may yet turn out to be a necessary moment on the way to establishing post-moral values. The Greek could not use his energies unless channelled into a specific purpose, which involved a denial of some possibilities of action and an affirmation of others. Yet modern culture, with its democratic and egalitarian ideals, has forgotten this fact, and has engendered a sickly kind of human, one who desires everything indiscriminately, who is caught up by a debilitating vertigo in the face of the infinite and lapses into a paralysis of action. As Nietzsche states in his essay on Homer, 'like swift-footed Achilles in the similes of Zeno the Eleate, infinity restricts him, he doesn't even catch up with the tortoise' (KSA 1 p. 790).

Moreover such thoughts cannot be regarded as mere Hegelian 'deviations' from his youth. Nietzsche's own comments on his early writings, especially the 'Attempt at a Self - Criticism' preceding the *Birth of Tragedy*, and his account of that work in *Ecce Homo* should not be regarded as exercising a paternal authority over the meaning of his work. Though these comments are of interest, and Nietzsche freely admits the Hegelian, Kantian and Schopenhauerian tenor of his early work, the texts elude their author's own attempt to grasp them. The Hegelianism of the *Birth of Tragedy* is present in all his texts, whether it be in the will to power's negation of the Other or supplanting by Dionysus of first Apollo and later Christ. For throughout his writings Nietzsche's emphasis is on the necessity for resistance, negation, and above all suffering, in the production of the *Übermensch*. Humans

suffer in the name of the production of higher culture and higher forms of life, and it is the precondition of the achievement of the *Übermensch* that the majority of Mankind should suffer. In 'The Greek State', the third essay of the *Five Prefaces* Nietzsche justifies slavery in the ancient world as a necessity to ensure great men: 'The suffering of wretchedly living people must be increased in order to facilitate the production of an artistic world by a limited number of Olympian humans' (KSA 1 p. 767).

On the individual level too, the self cannot produce a wider horizon of self-interpreting and self-creation except by overcoming resistance, by suffering. In the *Twilight of the Idols* he remarks that 'Today the individual can only be made possible by pruning,' adding that the root of modern decadence lies in the refusal to accept this need for discipline and restraint (KSA 6 p. 143). Modernity is decadent because it seeks to deny, in a manner similar to the ascetic ideal of metaphysics, the vital flux which constitutes the authentic self. The Cartesian subject is posited as a substance untainted by the dynamics of the external world. Plato's soul is immortal, and not only does one lead a just life to be sure of a healthy soul, but also with an eye to the possible judgement in the afterlife which Rhadamanthus might pass on one's actions. In the *Phaedo* Plato's Socrates sees the symmetrical harmony of the soul as an indication of its immortality, of its resistance to change and decay. Likewise Modernity seeks rest from the ceaseless struggle and conflict which determines the self and which is the source of the energies for self-overcoming. In contrast, Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical rejection of the possibility of absolute knowledge, combined with his adoption of the dialectic of hermeneutics with its implicit goal of attaining the Absolute means that there never can be a moment of satiety, of rest. Will to power will always be confronted by the possibility of more, indeed life itself can never be fully exhausted, for it is always possible to produce more interpretations, as Nehemas has argued.²³ In contrast, Nietzsche writes of the modern human that 'his most fundamental longing is for the war which he is to finally come to a stop; happiness is to him . . . pre-eminently the happiness of resting, of being undisturbed, of being sated, of unity achieved at last' (KSA 5 p. 120-1) and compares him to the higher type of individual, whose instinct to live is born of precisely the opposite drive, the drive to wage war, the refusal to be satisfied, the individual who has achieved self-mastery, but only the mastery of his drives in order to direct them towards dissolving his own being and resurrecting another. 'Thus arise those magical ungraspable and unfathomable ones, those enigmatic humans predestined to victory and seduction, whose most beautiful expression is Alcibiades and Caesar . . . amongst artists perhaps Leonardo da Vinci' (ibid. p. 121). The greatness of mankind is not to be sought in the noble simplicity

which Winckelmann thought he had found in the Greeks. Neither is it to be sought in the ascetic ideal of self-knowledge and self-denial. It is rather more to be found in 'his range and multiplicity, in his wholeness in the manifold' (KSA 5 pp. 146-7).

The ideal self in Nietzsche, the *Übermensch* as representative of the ideal individual in a post-metaphysical culture, is one whose status is always provisional and contingent. It is an openness to its constant potentiality for new interpretations of self and the world, a form of individual being which always awaits its own dissolution. As Nietzsche says, '*Losing oneself*'. Once one has found oneself one must understand how from time to time to lose oneself . . . For to the thinker it is disadvantageous to be tied to one person all the time' (KSA 2 p. 689). Yet this is far from approximating to Haar's conception of a being who willingly adopts the multiplicity of roles given him by the social body, who rejoices in the play of roles and the dissimulating adoption of masks. For the *Übermensch* is a solitary being. The implicit parallel I have drawn between the *Übermensch* and Heidegger's authentic *Dasein* is also no accident. In his openness to ever further potential ways of acting and being, the *Übermensch* offers a striking anticipation of authentic *Dasein*'s openness to its ownmost potentiality for being. So too, like authentic *Dasein*, the *Übermensch* pays no attention to the babble of 'das Man' in order to follow his own peculiar path.

Greatness does not lie in the herd; democracy and utilitarianism, with their concern for the common weal can only bring about a decline of human existence and a weakening of the instincts. Nietzsche writes 'He shall be greatest who can be most solitary, most hidden, most deviant, the human being beyond good and evil, the master of his virtues, the one who is overrich in will' (KSA 6 p. 147). One hesitates to actually name a figure who could embody those values which Nietzsche views as paradigmatic, yet his comments on Goethe in *Twilight of the Idols* make clear the kind of person he envisages. Goethe, notes Nietzsche, has the naturalness of the Renaissance man, whereby he refers to that kind of person for whom existence is a constant challenge to grow. 'He enlisted the aid of history, natural science, Antiquity, especially Spinoza, and above all practical activity' notes Nietzsche. 'He didn't cut himself off from life, he plunged himself into it; he was not disheartened and took as much as possible on himself, over himself, into himself. What he wanted was wholeness; he fought against the separation of reason, sensibility, feeling, will . . . he disciplined himself for totality, he created himself . . .' (KSA 6 p. 151). Goethe is the ideal future kind of individual, who keeps himself open to as many styles of understanding and being as possible, yet without lapsing into the modern hankering for absolute freedom, which as noted earlier, leads to a

paralysis of action; his is the 'wholeness in the manifold.' In contrast the 'Freedom which I don't mean' (KSA 6 p. 143) of Modernity with its 'demand for independence, for free development, for *laissez aller*', devoid of any restraint and self-discipline, '... is a symptom of *décadence*' (ibid.).²⁴

A recent commentator²⁵ has chided Nietzsche for his inability to conceive of a completely open self, inasmuch as 'letting go of oneself', allowing for that reversal of customary perspectives, is always undertaken in the name of self-interest. Admittedly, Nietzsche does show marked scepticism toward all forms of altruism, and he does seem to regard all human activity as bound to some form of interest, though in a sense far more fundamental than that envisaged by Foucault or current sociologists of knowledge. However Houlgate's view that Nietzsche's thought would be more accomplished if he had taken on board the Christian perspective (as manifest in the slave's comportment in his dialectic with the Master) apart from being somewhat bizarre, is also misplaced.

Central to Nietzsche's project, as I have interpreted it, is the attempt to somehow reconcile radical scepticism with faith in normativity, contingency and chaos with necessity. If we refuse to do this, if we refuse to submit our knowledge, our self-knowledge to scrutiny, there is a potential for catastrophe. Yet the way to avoid descent into reactive Nihilism is not an easy one, since it involves a substantial risk. It involves putting all our 'customary' perspectives in question, making everything which is familiar to us unfamiliar. As Nietzsche says in the preface to *Ecce Homo*, 'Philosophy, as I have hitherto understood it is living freely in ice and high mountains - seeking everything strange and questionable in existence' (KSA 6 p. 258), a view which he supports when he writes 'Every achievement, every step forward in knowledge follows from courage, from hardness towards oneself' (ibid. p. 259). It is a risky venture inasmuch as the human form of life is one that thrives on stability, on the ossification of perspectives. Yet if we try to imagine a self, or an interpretative practice in general which is not motivated by interpretative will to power, the significance of self-overcoming, as an act which places everything on which we depend in jeopardy, is lost. For if nothing is at stake, if there are no vested interests at work, there is also no sense in which self-overcoming is an achievement. Letting oneself go in the name of will to power is not a form of egoism, but rather is all the more significant an action when set against the background of one's being as a finite, self-asserting, desiring being. The free spirits are precisely those beings that can live by overcoming the selfsame perspectives on which they depend.

Nietzsche is of course aware of the possibility of an absolute openness, which he named as Buddhism. Yet this type of openness is not one which can ever

figure in his thought, for it is a consequence of passive or reactive Nihilism. All forms of appearance are felt to be mere illusion and hence their constitution becomes indifferent, since nothing is at stake. It is a way of thinking which cannot but lead one to pure inactivity, something which Nietzsche abhors, not in the name of selfishness, but rather because that is an easy or weak response. For as Houlgate himself admits, and it is a criticism which Georges Bataille has also made²⁶, the slave in Hegel's dialectic is open with a view to saving his own skin; he willingly submits to the rule of the Master because it is an easier choice than risking all in a life or death struggle. For Nietzsche there can be no such easy option, since without accepting risk nothing is achieved. As Zarathustra says, 'Free to die, and free in death, a sacred sayer of no, when it is no longer time for saying yes: thus he is an expert at life and death' (KSA 4 p. 95).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued for a number of points concerning Nietzsche's philosophy of the self, which will serve as a basis for investigation into his aesthetic theory. The first theme was the assertion that Nietzsche's so-called critique of the subject is much more limited in scope than that which many contemporary believe him to have carried out. The word 'subject' has for Nietzsche the connotation of a specific concept of human agency and knowing derived from a complex of interrelated and mutually dependent metaphysical, religious and morals ideologies. In metaphysics the most prominent proponents of this 'subject' are seen to be Plato and Descartes, while in the spheres of morality and religion the most culpable agent is Christianity and its ascetic morality. All three spheres share a common conception of human subjecthood as a unified, stable and autonomous intellect, one which in the right environment can exercise its powers of cognition unaffected by the putative 'lower' instincts and passions. As such it is a subject endowed with moral autonomy and responsibility, one of whom adherence to unconditional moral tenets can be expected, whether they be the 'thou shalt' of a legislating divinity, or obedience to an internal voice of conscience, as in Kant's categorical imperative.²⁷

The second theme was to argue that concomitantly Nietzsche develops a theory of the self which in many ways represents a determinate negation of the 'metaphysical' subject knowing. Nietzsche's alternative concept is of a self whose origins are many and varied, a self which cannot easily be dissociated from the physiological functions of the organic being of human existence, yet which simultaneously cannot simply be reduced to those functions of the organism. Because of its complex nature, the self cannot be interpreted as a simple unity, or indeed as a

simple relation of cognitive functions. It should be seen instead as a multiplicity, one which lacks any a priori order or regularity, a rethinking of the self which naturally reminds us of the proximity of Nietzsche's work in this respect to feminist critiques of the (decidedly male) metaphysical subject.

Thirdly I argued that although the self is not an a priori unity, it must nevertheless strive to attain an aesthetic unity, no matter how provisional that unity, in order to act on and control the environment. In his more general critique of metaphysics Nietzsche claims that although the fabrications of human interpretation bear a metaphoric relation to reality, they are nonetheless necessary fictions, so as to make life possible. Will to power which motivates the interpretative process ensures that the 'healthy' individual never ceases his drive to produce ever more complete, more comprehensive interpretations of the world, no matter how elusive the ideal of an 'objective' knowledge may be. By bringing this model to bear on the problem of the authentic mode of existence Nietzsche is arguing that the authentic lifestyle cannot derive its inspiration from the commands of Christian morality, which depends on a specific idea of subjecthood already revealed as being the pure negation of life itself. Instead, authentic existence, 'becoming who you are' consists in an application of the interpretation to oneself as interpreting being in the world, according the sensuous, physiological aspects of the self their due place, yet at the same time avoiding decay into an egalitarian democracy of the affects. It is a style of being which combines an exuberant affirmation of the vital forces of life with a severe discipline of the passions, in order to forge them into a weapon to maximise one's potential for action. Yet the impossibility of Absolute Knowledge means that this process of self-interpretation, self-expansion can never be exhausted: the *Übermensch* is the individual who is always engaged in the activity of self-overcoming, and never one that represents a utopian end-point.²⁸ Despite his obvious Hegelian leanings, and his critique of Modernity's lack of determinate negativity is another example, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* never reaches the Absolute. There is always the possibility of more, never a moment of rest and stasis.

Notes;

¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987), p. 160.

² Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990)

³ Op. cit. 'On the Prejudices of the Philosophers' § 20 KSA 5 pp. 34-5.

⁴ Having said that, Nietzsche nevertheless does maintain that the 'perspective' of some languages and vocabularies might be preferable to that of others. Tracy Strong notes, 'It is, however, entirely possible that a new language might be constructed, if one means by "new" a previously

unemployed series of interrelated concepts picturing the world anew . . . Nietzsche had dreams of removing from the language those qualities he saw to be the message and herald of nihilism.' See Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 57. See, too, note 7 below.

⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 16.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ J. Derrida 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' in *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) p. 280-1. In drawing a contrast between Nietzsche and Derrida on the possibility of critiquing metaphysics I am working against the interpretation of Nehamas, who maintains linguistic reform is not on the agenda in Nietzsche's critical thinking. Michel Haar, though obviously influenced by the thought of Derrida reads Nietzsche otherwise, maintaining that Nietzsche deliberately plays with the meaning of metaphysical concepts in order to bring out the ambiguities of meaning, with precisely the goal of undercutting the language of metaphysics. See 'Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language' in D. Allison (ed.), *The New Nietzsche* (New York: Delta Books, 1977). One might go further and suggest, as Strong has done, that Nietzsche coins his own set of counter-metaphysical concepts, imbued though they are with a certain irony and distance.

⁸ As Nicholas Davey has pointed out, there is remarkable similarity between Nietzsche and Hume on this particular issue. One should not be misled by this similarity into conflating their positions, however, for as I have demonstrated in the first chapter, Nietzsche's scepticism has a very different origin from that of the earlier thinker. See Davey, 'Nietzsche and Hume on Self and Identity', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 18 (1987).

⁹ M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974) pp. 47-8.

¹⁰ What is an Author? in J. Harari (ed.), *Textual Strategies* (London: Methuen, 1979) p. 159.

¹¹ 'The Turn towards Subjectivity: Michel Foucault's Legacy', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 18 (1987). See too Peter Dews' article 'The Return of the Subject in Late Foucault', *Radical Philosophy* 51 (1989) which makes a similar point, though comparing Foucault with the Frankfurt School.

¹² René Descartes, *Œuvres Philosophiques* éd. F. Aliquié (Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1963-73) Vol. II, p. 419.

¹³ Ibid. p. 499.

¹⁴ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (London: Faber, 1988).

¹⁵ 'La Critique Nietzscheenne de la Subjectivité', *Nietzsche Studien* 12 (1983) p. 93

¹⁶ L. P. Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

¹⁷Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, eds. G. E. H. Anscombe & G. H. von Wright (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970) § 101.

¹⁸Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* trans. & ed. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953) § 18.

¹⁹Nehemas, *Nietzsche* p. 182; Amélie Rorty, 'Self-Deception, Akrasia and Irrationality' in *Social Science Information* 19 (1980). It is curious, given Nehemas' reliance on this metaphor, that he should stress the goal of a unified synthesised self in Nietzsche. As I suggest, Nietzsche has in mind something much more open-ended, which is more in keeping with the Wittgensteinian figure.

²⁰Charles Altieri, 'Wittgenstein on Consciousness and Language: A Challenge to Derridean Literary Theory', *Modern Language Notes* 91 (1976).

²¹See, for example, the first chapter of Peter Dews' *Logics of Disintegration* (London: Verso, 1987). See too, the rather more complex essay by Manfred Frank 'Die Entropie der Sprache' in *Das Sagbare und das Unsagbare*, dealing in particular with the debate between Derrida and Searle.

²²Bruce Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990)

²³Nehemas, 'Immanent and Transcendent Perspectivism'.

²⁴Recently David Cooper has also put forward Goethe's name as candidate for Übermensch, in Cooper, *Authenticity and Learning. Nietzsche's Educational Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983). As Cooper points out, though, one has to be cautious when identifying any actual historical figures with the Nietzschean type, since there are many such candidates ranging from Socrates to Cesare Borgia or Macchiavelli. Few, I think, would concur with Baeumler's preferred choice of Hitler!

²⁵Stephen Houlgate, 'Power, Egoism and the "Open" Self in Nietzsche and Hegel', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 22 (1991).

²⁶Bataille, 'Hegel', in *L'Expérience Intérieure* in Georges Bataille, *Œuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970-76) vol. 5, pp. 127-30.

²⁷One is here alert to the dangers of taking the parallel of Übermensch and Dasein too far. Dasein's call of conscience is, from a Nietzschean perspective, a deeply metaphysical aspect to Heidegger's thinking.

²⁸On the non-utopian nature of Nietzsche's writing on the self see Ian Forbes, 'Marx and Nietzsche: the individual in history' in Keith Ansell-Pearson (ed.) *Nietzsche and Modern German Thought* (London: Routledge, 1991).

Laughter and Sublimity: Reading 'The Birth of Tragedy'

Having dealt with interpretation in Nietzsche, both as a paradigm to overcome the narrow 'metaphysical' assumption of objectivity and as a model for establishing some form of authentic self-understanding, we are in a position to approach the question of art. As I have indicated previously, it is within the sphere of art that interpretation is given space for its own free play, and it is the artist who best embodies the type of individual that can live with insecurities Nietzsche is asking us to accept.

This in itself is not a particularly startling or original claim with regard to Nietzsche's thought. However while the importance of art in his work is universally recognised, the question of art still remains often superficially understood. Attention tends to focus solely on *The Birth of Tragedy*, being the only full-length treatment of art in Nietzsche's oeuvre, dominates interpretations of the subject. It is a perfectly comprehensible state of affairs, inasmuch as his later writing on art remains in many respects quite scattered and unfocused. While we find in the first volume of *Human All-too human* the fourth section of some 78 aphorisms devoted to art and artists, this tends to be the exception.

Despite the difficulties involved it is necessary to sift through his entire body of writing to produce some synthesis of his mature statements on art and artists. *The Birth of Tragedy* represents an immature expression of a philosophy of art which is subsequently reformulated in many ways, yet which is guided by the pre-occupation I outlined above, namely the proper mode of reconciling contingency and necessity, of how to best formulate 'the doctrine of lawfulness in Becoming and of play in necessity' (KSA 1 p. 833). As such one might argue that Nietzsche's attempt to come to grips with the question of art is what gives shape to his wider criticism of metaphysics, for 'Only the aesthetic person sees the world thus, who has learnt from the artist and the work of art how the struggle of multiplicity can nevertheless carry within itself lawfulness and right . . . how necessity and play, conflict and harmony have to come together in the production of the work of art' (ibid. p. 831).

I am arguing, therefore, that *The Birth of Tragedy* should not be interpreted as an isolated phenomenon within Nietzsche's oeuvre, but rather as alluding to and introducing themes recurrent throughout his career, and with this we come to a second claim. Just as *The Birth of Tragedy* should not be understood as an isolated phenomenon amongst Nietzsche's own writings, so neither should Nietzsche's philosophy of art be understood as an isolated outburst or polemic without

precedent in the history of that philosophy. I am not thereby endorsing the view of Julian Young¹ that Nietzsche's philosophy of art constitutes little more than an expression of Schopenhauerian Kulturpessimismus. I am arguing, however, that it has to be set against the tradition of aesthetics, specifically from Kant onwards. Nietzsche's writing constitutes a perpetual impulse to elude the thought of Kant, whose presence repeatedly reinscribes itself within the Nietzschean corpus. A recent commentator has declared that 'No step in Nietzsche's thought is a mere transmission of the old tasks, even if its completion recalls them.'² Against this I am arguing that Nietzsche's critique of Aesthetics often fails to deliver what it promises. We see this most apparently in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where he claims to provide a new insight into art, yet produces an account which is both deeply Hegelian and Kantian. Hegelian in the dialectical structure of the Apollo - Dionysus relation, and Kantian in his use of the discourse of the sublime to narrate the function of the tragic.

This claim is again not a particularly original one yet it is one frequently overlooked, supplanted by considerations of the abstraction of the Apollinian and the Dionysian, without taking into account the genealogy of the ideas at work in *The Birth of Tragedy* and Nietzsche's later writings on art. And here we come to a third aspect of Nietzsche, which has only recently attracted attention amongst German commentators, and none at all amongst anglophone critics.³ This concerns the problem of reconciling the privilege Nietzsche accords to art with those other aspects of his thinking which tend toward a denial of the distinction between art and its other. Nietzsche apparently maintains a belief in the existence of a difference, yet his remarks on interpretation and on the metaphoric foundation of language have led to the post-structuralist dissolution of the philosophy - literature opposition, a dissolution which accords well with the Avant-garde's attempts to undermine the autonomy of art and its institutions. This latter issue will have to be dealt with in due course, but before I return to it I shall first offer an analysis of the salient aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy of art as they bear on the thematics of the first two chapters.

In his essay *Genesis and Genealogy*⁴ Paul de Man uses Nietzsche's work on tragedy as an opportunity to offer an exemplar of deconstructive interpretation, focusing on the difference between Apollo and Dionysus on the one hand, and the process whereby the rhetoric of *The Birth of Tragedy* undercuts its own putative claims on the other. For de Man Nietzsche brings a 'negative valorisation' to the (Apollinian) category of representation, which serves to mediate, or hide the unspeakable truth of Dionysus, yet at the same time he claims to make present in the Apollinian rhetoric of *The Birth of Tragedy* that same Dionysian truth, with a voice of authority to which he is not entitled. As de Man notes: 'The authority of

his voice has to legitimise an act by means of which the aporia of unmediated representation, by itself a logical absurdity, would be suspended [aufgehoben]' (p. 96). The logocentric authority with which the authorial voice claims to speak the truth about tragedy, simply doesn't square with the thematics of the text which speak of the *illusion* of textual representation and form. It is a familiar problem which has occupied philosophy since the time of Plato's attack on the arts for their inability to represent the truth *as such*, a criticism which is in turn compromised by Plato's own need to use literary devices (eg. dramatic dialogue, myth) to present the truth of his discourse

In response to de Man's deconstruction both Henry Staten and Thomas Böning⁵ have offered critiques of his position to the effect that it is not a simple opposition of the real and the representation, or truth and illusion. In their interpretations the Apollinian and the Dionysian are equi-primordial, neither derived from or secondary to the other. Their relation could not be further from Kofman's paternal metaphor, where the Dionysian is somehow a father to the secondary, Apollinian representation, a metaphor which de Man cites with approval. Consequently both the Dionysian and the Apollinian are to be seen as forms of representation (Nietzsche uses the term *Erscheinungsform* or 'form of appearance'), a realisation which even de Man notes Nietzsche had made in his unpublished notes of the same period. Most notably in the long note from Spring 1871 (KSA 7 12: [1] pp. 359-369) Nietzsche repeatedly subverts the Schopenhauerian vocabulary of the Will we find in *The Birth of Tragedy* by stressing that the Will is itself an *Erscheinungsform*, terming it 'the primordial form of appearance whereby all Becoming is to be understood' (ibid. p. 364).

Now although these criticisms are timely and perceptive, neither Staten nor Böning pay attention to the tragedy in the book's title; instead, the argument tends to get bogged down in the discussion of the Apollinian and the Dionysian *in abstracto*. Moreover neither Böning nor Staten manage, or indeed even intend, to cash out in concrete terms the precise significance of these two ill-defined terms. While they are undoubtedly central to *The Birth of Tragedy*, and an account of it would be unimaginable without them, it is perhaps useful if one temporarily circumvents the arguments concerning the nature of representation in order to examine the function of the tragic in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Above all, what does Nietzsche mean when he informs us that tragedy provides us with metaphysical consolation through the mimesis of human destruction? How does Nietzsche's work offer us an interpretation of Greek tragedy more satisfactory than Aristotle's? What relation do the lofty abstractions of the Dionysian and the Apollinian actually bear to the concrete praxis of tragic drama? Why is the destruction of the tragic hero of cardinal importance?

Sublimity

If we seek to answer such questions it is necessary first to locate Nietzsche's book within the history of nineteenth century philosophies of tragedy, and in particular it is in the light of those writings which map out the relation of the tragic to the sublime that I shall read *The Birth of Tragedy*. In this respect it is no accident that Nietzsche praises Schiller's subtle understanding of the true significance of the tragic chorus, an understanding which the latter puts into practice in *The Bride of Messina*. For it is Schiller who plays the seminal role in making explicit the connection between the sublime, in particular the dynamic sublime of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and the affirmative pleasure we derive from tragedy, a connection later made by the Romantics and Schopenhauer, and one which organises the conceptual framework of Nietzsche's treatise.

The concept of the sublime is one with a long history, beginning with Longinus' *On the Sublime*, the rediscovery of which led to the proliferation of works on aesthetics in eighteenth century Britain. I do not intend to embark on a history of the subject. That would require a separate study, and in any case has been exhaustively discussed elsewhere.⁶ However its salient aspects are worth recalling briefly. In Longinus the sublime denotes that moment when one's affectivity and cognitive disposition towards the world are subjected to a sense of displacement. He writes, 'amazement and wonder exert invincible power and force and get the better of every hearer . . . Sublimity . . . produced at the right moment, tears everything up like a whirlwind.'⁷ I use the word displacement, because the words which Longinus uses to describe the effect of the sublime, ἔκστασις ['ecstasy, or literally 'standing outside oneself'], and the action of the 'whirlwind', διαφορέω [lit. 'to carry off'] both contain a sense of physical displacement, one that is taken up by the eighteenth century motif of sublime 'transport', as Peter de Bolla has indicated.⁸

It is a description which accords well with the eighteenth century penchant for psychologising accounts of aesthetic taste, and hence finds itself echoed in the work of, say, Burke who writes that in the sublime 'the mind is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object . . . it anticipates our reasonings and hurries us on by an irresistible force.'⁹ The sublime is not merely an irresistible power, it also presents an occasion when the subject has an overwhelming experience of its own nullity, when the mind is literally robbed of its own powers. Yet at the same time, this annihilation of the subject is accompanied by the paradoxical expansion of the mind. Burke writes that the mind will always assimilate 'some part of the dignity and importance of the

things which it contemplates' (pp. 50-1) a process which leads to 'that glorifying and sense of inward greatness that always fills the reader of such passages in poets and orators as are sublime' (p. 51). Hence the concept of the sublime has a dialectical structure, whereby the subject is robbed of its autonomy yet finds itself expanded by the same experience. It is a simultaneous negation and affirmation of the subject, a feature incorporated into the German tradition from Kant onwards.

Turning to Kant the crucial passage with which to begin is the 'Analytic of the Sublime' in the 3rd *Critique* where he describes the feelings of pleasure and displeasure aroused by the sublime in nature. In particular the key is the discussion of the dynamically sublime in § 28. The judgement of the dynamically sublime occurs when we are confronted by a natural object whose overwhelming power has the capacity for annihilating our sensuous existence: 'Hence the aesthetic judgement can only deem nature a might, and so dynamically sublime, in so far as it is looked upon as an object of fear.'¹⁰ This is not to imply, however, that we are actually threatened by the object, for then we would be more concerned with self-preservation than with judging its sublimity. Above all one must be able to 'look upon an object as fearful, and yet not be afraid of it,' in other words one must be able to imagine oneself being in a situation where one would be in a state of fear, without actually being in fear of the natural object. The reason for this is that accompanying our affective response (i.e. non-conceptual) to the object and the concomitant estimation of our physical helplessness in facing it, is the disclosure of our capacity to transcend the omnipotence of nature such that we are no longer concerned with natural needs and quotidian interests, and hence feel no longer subject to it. Kant notes that 'we also found in our rational faculty another non-sensuous standard . . . in comparison with which everything in nature is small.' It is a parallel to the mathematical sublime where our feeling of displeasure at the inability of the imagination to form an adequate intuition of a colossal object, for example the Milky Way, is accompanied by a feeling of pleasure due to our capacity to form a 'logical estimation' of its overwhelming magnitude.

This disclosure of a super-sensuous faculty which can transcend the concerns of our physical being and exercise free will in the face of necessity, points toward morality, and within the architectonic of Kant's system this is precisely the function that aesthetic judgement fulfils, namely that of a bridge between representation and moral action. Indeed Kant himself is anxious to stress this connection in order to defend himself against the charge that since the danger is only imaginary the sublime is a matter of 'little seriousness', and hence the relation between the sublime and morality needs a little more explanation.

In the introduction to the 3rd *Critique* Kant stresses that judgement mediates between the two otherwise heterogeneous spheres of morality and

cognition, or practical and theoretical reason. In the latter, Kant notes, 'Concepts of nature contain the ground of all theoretical cognition a priori and rest . . . upon the legislative authority of understanding, whereas in the former the concept of freedom . . . rests upon that of reason' (p. 15). In the 'Analytic of the Sublime' he notes too that the Imagination, which in the aesthetic judgement engenders a pleasurable and harmonious interplay between the faculties of reason and understanding, achieves its effect partly through dependence on the physical conditions of the judging subject, but also partly in accordance with the ideas of reason, which exercises free will in the act of judgement. Hence although the aesthetic judgement is a universal one (i.e. is not completely arbitrary), and demands universal assent, it is at the same time *subjectively* universal. As an instrument of reason, aesthetic judgement cannot be reduced to an objectively determined set of rules. Now while the Beautiful may maintain this delicately maintained balance between the Understanding and Reason, with neither gaining the upper hand, in the judgement of the Sublime, the balance tips firmly towards pure Reason. No longer governed by the conceptually bound interests of our sensuous existence, we can turn to the super-sensuous standards of pure Reason.

This super-sensuous standard [Maßstab] is nothing other than the moral law, and judging sublimity discloses our nature as moral beings, who can obey, moreover are obliged to obey, the moral law in the exercise of free will, and Kant acknowledges that 'the intellectual and intrinsically final (moral) good, estimated aesthetically, instead of being represented as beautiful must rather be represented as sublime' (§ 29). Thus Kant regards as sublime too the waging of war, provided it is waged for the sake of moral duty rather than self-interest. For it reveals the capacity of humans to pay scant regard to their physical welfare in order to fulfil their higher obligations to their moral, rational self. One notes he is explicitly drawing out the tension between the finitude of humans as natural beings and the infinitude of the demands of the moral law, and as such seems to be regarding the aesthetic experience of the sublime as something amounting to a call to authenticity, though the notion of authenticity would, strictly speaking, have little place in Kant's project.

Kant's account of aesthetic experience is highly ambiguous, despite the apparent clarity which the above exposition might suggest. Occupying a mediating position between the psychologising theories of taste of Hutcheson, Shaftesbury and Burke on the one hand, and the fully-blown philosophies of art of the German Romantics, Hegel and Idealism on the other, it remains unclear whether Kant is describing subjective or objective phenomena. What initially seems to be a subjective psychology of aesthetic experience becomes compromised by his analysis of the

properties of the *object* which are relevant to judgements of taste, an ambiguity which provokes the critical response of, amongst others, Schiller.

Dissatisfied with the ambiguous status of the notion of subjective universality in the Kantian sublime, Schiller attempts to establish an *objective* ground for the experience of the sublime such that it can be reproduced at will. Indeed it is tragic drama which in his eyes can engender a feeling of the sublime unmatched by nature itself, and the sublime changes, in the hands of Schiller, from a merely subjective experience to an objectively determinable feature of tragedy.¹¹ The disinterested self, that from a safe spectatorial distance passes an aesthetic judgement on the sublime, becomes in Schiller quite literally the spectator in a theatre.

I shall not discuss Schiller's better known works, but rather examine his shorter essays on the sublime and tragedy, including 'On the Sublime', 'On the Basis of the Enjoyment of Tragic Objects', and 'On Tragic Art'.¹² In many respects Schiller offers little in these essays that deviates substantially from Kant's position, but he does discuss the dynamic sublime more extensively than Kant and in terms which, although dressed up in the moral language of the Enlightenment, look forward to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. In Schiller's essays the sublime has become less an epistemological and moral problem than an existential challenge. At the beginning of *On the Sublime* he outlines the human existential condition thus 'This is the case of Man. Surrounded by innumerable powers which are all superior to him and which play a game of mastery over him, he demands, through his nature [i.e. as the one being that can exercise free will] to suffer at the hands of no force' (SW vol. 21 p. 38). Continuing further, Schiller notes that culture, whose goal is to enable the exercise of free will, has devised two ways to escape this predicament. The first, which he terms 'physical culture', is to achieve mastery over nature through science and learning. In the supreme act of will to power mankind kind seeks to redress the imbalance of forces by turning the forces of nature into 'tools of his own will' (p. 39). Yet as he notes, this strategy is a limited one, for there are limits to what science can achieve. Inevitably the forces of nature will 'evade human power, and subject him to their own' (ibid.). The alternative strategy which culture has devised, so-called 'moral culture', is to transcend altogether the natural world, to abrogate the physical aspect of human existence. This moral education, which discloses the moral, rational and supersensuous self can be enhanced by appeal to the aesthetic tendency within us whereby our true nature can be 'aroused by certain sensuous objects, and cultivated towards this Idealist change in disposition by purification of one's feelings' (p. 40).

Having established the pivotal role of sensuous objects, and Schiller later sees art as a supplement to nature in the task of moral education, he goes on rigorously to distinguish between 'merely' beautiful and sublime objects. Above all

Schiller warns against becoming too attached to the sensuous form of the beautiful object. The feeling of freedom offered by the beautiful object is illusory; it provides pleasure because it harmonises nature with reason, and hence tempts us to make the same mistake as the scientists in 'wanting to bring this arbitrary chaos of phenomena into the unity of cognition' (p. 48). In other words beautiful works of art ('fine arts' Schiller calls them in *On the Basis of the Pleasure the Enjoyment of Tragic Objects*) are deceptive through their luring us into too great an attachment to the world of sensuous form, a world where we allow ourselves to become enslaved once again by the overwhelming forces of nature. Thus the task of moral education must be carried out by the sublime work of art (Schiller terms such works the 'emotive arts' in *On the Basis*), the work of art which although a sensuous object must efface itself as such, a work where 'reason and sensuousness are not in accord' (p. 43), a work which as in Kant discloses our super-sensuous nature by sensuous means. Schiller adds: 'The sublime therefore creates for us a way out of the sensuous world, a world where the Beautiful would like to keep us forever prisoner . . . often a single sublime emotion suffices to tear apart this web of deception' (p. 45). As such it is a work which, far from seeking to shelter us from the suffering caused by the overwhelming powers of the contingent, natural world, rather confronts us with them: it is a mimesis of the destructive forces at large in the realm of the sensuous; 'Our salvation does not lie in ignorance of the dangers beleaguering us, for this ignorance must eventually cease, but only through acquaintance with them. We are helped to this acquaintance by the terrible, magnificent spectacle of change, which destroys everything, then creates it again, then destroys it all again . . . which history displays in adequate measure, and which tragic art mimetically brings before our eyes' (p. 52).¹³

It is also this affirmative catharsis accompanying destruction which explains the peculiar attraction that fear and pain seem to exercise on humans as a whole. Schiller notes in *On Tragic Art* that the degree of pleasure obtained from an affect seems to be in inverse proportion to the agreeableness of its content; 'Everyone presses around the narrator of a murder tale; we devour the most fantastic ghost story with ever greater enthusiasm the more our hair stands on end' (SW vol. 20 p. 148).

Following Kant, Schiller sees this encounter with the sublime as a shattering event. The nullity of the subject's sensuous existence is revealed, causing a feeling of depression [Unlust], together with the revelation of the subject's super-sensuous, literally super-natural self, a realisation which is the cause of elation [Lust], and hence we see preserved the dialectical structure of the sublime as inherited from, amongst others, Burke. Naturally that art form which elicits these two responses simultaneously par excellence is tragedy, for on the tragic stage is per-

formed the annihilation of one or more human beings, only to bring us to a higher awareness of our nature. It is the poetic genre which, as Schiller writes in *On the Basis of the Enjoyment of Tragic Objects* manages to 'delight us through pain' (SW vol. 20 p. 140). As if to capitalise on this insight Schiller lists a number of examples from tragedy where dramatic heroines and heroes achieve a moral sublimity in the face of overwhelming adversity in the physical, indeed figures who in the most extreme cases display an active will to self-destruct in their refusal to submit to sensuous contingency.

In tracing the transition from Kant to Schiller we notice a shift in emphasis. Although the basic structure of the sublime remains constant, there are certain differences which leave Schiller closer to Nietzsche, as will be apparent later. The most important difference between Schiller and Kant is that the former places the sublime firmly within the sphere of the cultural; the response to the tension between on the one hand, the finitude of subjective sensibility, and the demand to be able to exercise free will on the other, is now a cultural responsibility. As such it falls to art to articulate this problem and provide a satisfying resolution. Beautiful art, while appealing to the aesthetic 'tendency' within humans cannot do this, for it tempts the spectator to linger in the realm of the sensuous. Instead the beautiful must be allied with the sublime, in order to efface itself, to point toward that which exceeds representation.

Before relating the above discussion to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* I shall examine one further theory of the sublime which preserves much of the Kantian and Schillerian discourse while at the same time emptying it of its Enlightenment moralising. I am referring to Schopenhauer, who occupies a pivotal position as mediator between Idealism and the Romantics on the one hand, and the young Nietzsche on the other. For Schopenhauer aesthetic experience (and that of the sublime in particular) constitutes that enlightened state where one achieves insight into the illusory nature of the phenomenal world, dominated by the principium individuationis and the will-to-live. It is an insight which reveals the autonomous self for what it is: a self-objectification of the Will and nothing besides, a mere nullity. This dissolution of individuality which occurs in the act of aesthetic contemplation, where one savours the prospect of one's own extinction, shows the fear of suffering and death too, to be illusory, bound as they are to the notions of selfhood and self-interest. Fear of death is entirely irrational for Schopenhauer, since death serves merely to restore one to one's true, subjectless, state.

The sublime in particular renders the turn to aesthetic, will-less, contemplation all the more shattering since one is literally forced to wrench oneself free of considerations of self-preservation and desire. Contrary to the sublime object in Kant, sublimity for Schopenhauer presents the beholder with a spectacle whose

threat to his continued phenomenal, bodily existence is actual. Schopenhauer writes: 'with the sublime, that state of pure knowing is obtained first of all by a conscious and violent tearing away from the relations of the same object to the will which are recognised as unfavourable, by a free exaltation.'¹⁴ This state of pure knowing can be obtained either by being confronted by a hostile spectacle (i.e. Kant's dynamical sublime), and Schopenhauer gives the example of a desert, or by an encounter with the absolutely great (the mathematical sublime). As an illustration of this latter type of experience Schopenhauer offers the following: 'If we lose ourselves in contemplation of the infinite greatness of the universe in space and time . . . we feel ourselves reduced to nothing . . . But against such a ghost of our own nothingness . . . there arises the immediate consciousness that all these worlds exist in our representation . . . our dependence on it is now annulled by its dependence on us' (WWR vol. I p. 205).

In the same tradition as Schiller, Schopenhauer sees tragedy as the art form which best facilitates experience of the sublime, and like Schiller before him, characterises the essence of tragedy as the mimesis of human catastrophe, which in Schopenhauer's thought is an epiphenomenon of the Will itself in its blind, purposeless striving. In particular, Schopenhauer devotes section 51 of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* to an extensive account of the function of poetry and its place within his metaphysical system.

Tragedy is 'the description of the terrible side of life. The unspeakable pain, the wretchedness and misery of mankind . . . It is the antagonism of the Will with itself' (WWR I p. 252). At the same time the depth of suffering, the insidious wickedness which is the object of tragic mimesis serves to tear away the veil of the Maya, to expose the deceptive truth of the principium individuationis. As Schopenhauer says 'The motives that were previously so powerful now lose their force, and instead of them, the complete knowledge of the real nature of the world, acting as a quieter of the will, produces resignation, the giving up not merely of life, but of the will-to-live itself' (WWR I p. 253). For this reason too it is wrong, Schopenhauer notes, to demand poetic justice. To demand this would be to restrict oneself to the concerns of the phenomenal world, to assume that the individual soul of the tragic hero deserves justice. The wisdom of tragedy is to render such demands obsolete and absurd.

In the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer is keen to ridicule any notion of a self as substance; and hence the ultimate paradox of tragedy is that it should provide a consolation for us by offering the disintegration of our own egos in the form of a dramatic spectacle. In the second volume, there are indications that he tends towards a more Idealist position, albeit without the moral imperative accompanying both Kant's and Schiller's notions of the self.

For in the section on poetry in the later volume he remarks that 'precisely in this way we become aware that there is still left in us something different that we cannot possibly know positively, but only negatively, as that which does not will life' (WWR II p. 433). This is one isolated remark though, and one should beware of laying too much emphasis on it, for the general outline of Schopenhauer's position a further shift away from the original formulation of the sublime. Schopenhauer has now rejected the dialectical structure of the concept; whereas it had hitherto involved moments of negation and affirmation, sublimity in his thought no longer contains any affirmation of the subject. I shall be arguing that *The Birth of Tragedy* represents an attempt to answer both the naive metaphysics of the tradition from Burke, Kant and Schiller, though an answer which avoids the Nihilistic consequences of Schopenhauer, who in many respects employs the theory of the sublime in order to turn it on its head.

The World as Aesthetic Phenomenon

In the previous section I have mapped out the discourse of the sublime laying special emphasis on the tragic as a privileged locus of understanding, where the usual categories of knowing are pushed to their limits then revealed for what they are, namely schematic forms of representation. In all three philosophers discussed this knowledge can only be disclosed when the sensory aspects of human existence are stretched to the limit, whether it be through mortal threat to our sensuous selves, or the inability of the imagination to provide an intuition adequate to a particular concept. In all cases there is revealed an aspect to human being exceeding sensuous finitude, one transcending the boundaries of the phenomenal world. Simultaneously, this knowledge is seen by Schiller and Schopenhauer to offer a solution to certain existential dilemmas. For Schiller it is the problem of reconciling the demand to exercise free will with the empirical fact that as embodied beings we are surrounded by natural forces far superior to ourselves. For Schopenhauer it is the matter of coming to terms with the meaningless suffering which lies at the root of all phenomenal existence. Assiduously avoiding the Christian impulse to give suffering a meaning, i.e. as the atonement for original sin, he prefers the deeper insight that fear of suffering and pain is misplaced. Unlike the theodicy of Greek tragedy Schopenhauer's sublime represents an algodicy, to borrow Peter Sloterdijk's neologism,¹⁵ i.e. an attempt to come to terms with the problem of pain *after* the death of God. The key to all these thinkers lies in the category of the sublime, a category which combines beautiful sensuous form with the recognition that this form is itself only a phenomenal representation, or objectification, of

another underlying metaphysical reality. Having dealt with these earlier thinkers it is now time to turn to Nietzsche and set him in relation to these other theories.

If one follows even the most conservative account of Nietzsche's epistemological critique, of necessity the function of the sublime as described above will be somewhat modified. Talk of revealing the real essence of the world, of tearing asunder the veil of the Maya, or of the disclosure of the immortal super-sensuous self can have no place within *The Birth of Tragedy*. Although this work is still permeated, as Nietzsche later admits, with the vocabulary of Schopenhauer and 'reeks offensively Hegelian' (KSA 6 p. 310), it has to be discussed against the background of the approximately contemporary essay 'On Truth and Lie in their Extramoral Sense', with which I began my analysis of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics. Additionally it has to be related to those Nachlaß writings of the early 1870's which indicate the extent to which Nietzsche has already distanced himself from the metaphysics of his inspiration, Schopenhauer.

As we have seen, there is even in Nietzsche's earliest work a refusal to accept any metaphysical notions of essence or any distinctions between essence and appearance, *essentia* and *existentia*. Individuals inhabit a world of representations, to remain entrapped within a semiotic universe, and herein lies the paradox of trying to understand a universe which is recognised to have no intrinsic meaningfulness. The closest they can come to understanding the 'indecipherable' reality is to see it as a goalless, insatiable, self-consuming will along the lines of Schopenhauer. Yet even to declare that the world and its suffering are meaningless is in itself to make a meaningful statement. Notions of meaninglessness are already tied to a particular set of meanings, to a specific conceptual history, enmeshed within a certain configuration of values. In Schopenhauer's case it is as the determinate negation of the Christian and Hegelian teleological notions of a purposeful universe. This realisation is apparent in *The Birth of Tragedy* too when the 'truth' of existence cannot be conveyed directly, but has to be mediated in the form of a myth, that of King Midas' encounter with Silenus. Indeed the most powerful way of expressing this lack of meaning in the world which Nietzsche uses is not to attempt to name it at all but instead to describe the feeling of nausea which results once one has seen the elaborate of meaning humankind has created for what it is. He writes 'In this sense the Dionysian person is similar to Hamlet: both have once cast a true glance into the nature of things, they have gained knowledge, and it nauseates them to undertake any action, for their action can change nothing in the eternal nature of things, they find it laughable or ignominious' (KSA 1 p. 56-7).

In the light of these remarks it becomes clear that within the framework already apparent in the early Nietzsche's thought, the sublime is no longer simply a means to overcoming the limitation of human embodiment through the disclosure of

the metaphysical super-sensuous truth underlying all phenomenal existence. As I shall demonstrate shortly, the function of the sublime in Nietzsche is analogous to that in the thinkers already discussed inasmuch as it dispels the aura of representation which Schiller had already warned against. However it provides metaphysical consolation not so much by revealing some metaphysical 'truth' but by offering an existential challenge, thus avoiding the resignationism inherent in Schopenhauer's account. In my first chapter I had already suggested that Nietzsche does not criticise the conceptual apparatus of metaphysical thinking merely to score philosophical points, but out of a desire to go beyond the reactive Nihilism he sees as a necessary consequence of metaphysics. It is a concern with *spiritual* health, and hence too his paradoxical use of Christian and medical imagery to describe both societies and moral codes. Consequently in *The Birth of Tragedy* it is not merely a matter of types of representation, but rather of choosing the appropriate ethical and existential response to the challenge which tragedy lays before its spectators. In this respect, and before continuing further this line of discussion, one must secondly consider Nietzsche's statement that 'only as an aesthetic phenomenon can existence and the world eternally be justified' (KSA 1 p. 47).

There are two, by no means necessarily mutually exclusive, ways of interpreting this phrase. The first, looking forward to Nietzsche's later insistence on the fictional status of logic and scientific knowledge, assumes that for Nietzsche individual and societal existence can only be rendered enduring if we remember that the world we inhabit is a fiction. By this Nietzsche would be referring to the etymology of fiction from 'fingere' - make, to designate the world as the product of a constitutive consciousness. Though not wanting to make the human subject the transcendent ground of the world as a system of significations, Nietzsche is clearly making explicit what is latent in Kant's Critical Project, namely that the interpreter, far from finding a pre-existent reality, in fact produces that reality.¹⁶ Hence according to this interpretation of Nietzsche's assertion one need not feel oppressed by the strait-jacket of Christian and bourgeois morality, since they themselves are manufactured values, and can be, indeed should be replaced by other, more self-critical and hence authentic ones.

Alternatively one can interpret him as claiming that it is only through aesthetic objects, and here Nietzsche means works of art, that the world and human life can be redeemed. The passage which immediately precedes the one under discussion can be adduced to support such a reading, for Nietzsche writes 'we may well assume of ourselves that . . . we have our highest worth in works of art - for only as an aesthetic phenomenon can existence and the world eternally be justified' (ibid.). Nietzsche's inclusion of the words 'higher worth' in this passage points towards that dialectic of negation and affirmation characteristic of earlier accounts

of the sublime we have seen. For thus the work of art would be thought of as offering a perspective on the world and the human existential condition which discloses a capacity within individuals to relate to their representations in a manner free of the ideology of metaphysics. By this is meant the capacity to disengage from one's average 'everyday' absorption in signs, in order to gain a deeper insight into their status as constituents of a web of signs. If this interpretation is valid, and Nietzsche's mention of *works* of art in the plural might not be insignificant in this respect, we have a much more low level aesthetic concern. As in the case of Schiller and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche seems to be awarding a special status to tragic works of art, as aesthetic objects which provide an insight inaccessible to the scientific world view, one which provides a temporary release from the nausea of quotidian life.

So far I have only tentatively suggested that one move in this direction, yet a further examination reveals passages which are much more explicit, and allow us to feel quite entitled to link Nietzsche's book with the theory of the sublime. In particular, section seven, which deals with the function of the tragic chorus, quite openly speaks of the sublime in Greek tragedy, the relevant section being worth quoting in its entirety; 'Here, in this highest danger of the will, there approaches, as a redeeming, healing enchantress, art; it alone can turn those nauseous thoughts about the horror and the absurdity of existence into representations with which one can live: these are the sublime, as the artistic harnessing of the horrific, and the comic, as the artistic breaking of the nausea of the absurd' (KSA 1 p. 57). As if this were insufficient evidence Nietzsche notes earlier in the same section that tragedy provides the one true 'metaphysical consolation . . . that at the bottom of things life, despite all apparent change, is indestructibly powerful and joyful' (ibid. p. 56). These are motifs which will reappear in due course. However, having dealt with preliminary aspects of this interpretation it is now time to go into greater detail.

Contrary to de Man one can argue that the basic assumption underpinning *The Birth of Tragedy* and the logic of the Apollinian and Dionysian opposition, is the acceptance that the world, Being, existence, reality, truth, whichever term one chooses, can never appear as such. Since truth is a function of grammar knowledge would be a discursive relation of the form '*p* is *q*', an operation which also creates an intelligible world.¹⁷ Moreover as I have suggested in the account of the dialectic of interpretation in chapter one, although one can attach ever more predicates to the world of experience, although one can interpret it on the basis of ever wider perspectives, rendering it ever more determined and complex, with the *implicit* goal of exhausting the total possibilities available, Nietzsche recognises that this Hegelian attitude is simply not possible. The dialectic of knowledge presents an infinite task, for the world cannot be reduced to any number of predicates that can be attached to

it or to the number of interpretations which can be made of it. However, this representing activity nevertheless answers a number of ethical and existential demands which preoccupied the early Nietzsche, responding to the figure of Schopenhauer. These concern the possibility of attaching value to the world once it is recognised as denuded of intrinsic meaning, as a site of unmitigated suffering, in the absence of any Hegelian redemption of history. We know the Schopenhauerian response to these questions, one characterised by an attitude of resignation. That of Nietzsche is of course quite the opposite, for his rejection of Schopenhauer's reactive Nihilism is undertaken in the name of a will-to-live (which will later be superseded by will to power), and in *The Birth of Tragedy* he is exploring the forms of representation which can go beyond the Schopenhauerian passivity he will later condemn so definitively.

The first way to further the will-to-live is to create a world of beauty, from which the nausea of life, the fear of meaninglessness, is banished. I am speaking of course of the Apollinian artistic impulse which echoes Schiller's remarks noted above concerning 'physical culture'. This is the world of forms which seduce with their beauty, becoming themselves objects of desire. such as to elicit the response 'It is a dream ! I want to dream further !' (KSA 1 p. 27). In a later portion of the text which ironically borrows heavily from Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory Nietzsche sums up the aim of the Apollinian thus; 'here Apollo conquers the suffering of the individual through the illuminating glorification of eternal appearance, here beauty gains victory over the suffering which permeates life' (KSA 1 p. 108). Drawing on Schopenhauer's equation of beauty with knowledge of the timeless Platonic Idea¹⁸, Nietzsche observes how Apollinian representation, manifest primarily in myth, strives towards a denial of the temporal, a denial which he moreover claims facilitates political life. For once a people has failed to understand itself in terms of timeless myth, it undergoes a crisis of self-estimation, a condition which prepares the ground for the advent of Nihilism. He writes, 'A people is only worthy, as is also a person, for as long as it can impress upon its experiences the mark of the eternal . . . and displays its unconscious conviction of the relativity of time' (KSA 1 p. 148). As Nietzsche notes, the beautiful finds itself symbolised by Apollo, the etymology of whose name can be traced back to notions of appearing and shining [der Scheinende]. This is the world of forms which supplement the contingent, fragmentary and arbitrary processes which rule everyday life. As Nietzsche says 'The higher truth, the perfection of these states of affairs in contrast to the sketchy intelligibility of daily reality . . . is the analogue both of the capacity for affirmation and of the arts in general, whereby life is made possible and worth living' (KSA 1 p. 27). Hence the Apollinian form (and the beautiful work of art is a mimesis of this natural impulse) supplements the essential lack or negativity at the

base of existence, a lack which Schopenhauer had defined as the blind desire of the Will but which Nietzsche refuses to name *as such*.

Having established these basic elements of the Apollinian drive, Nietzsche then goes on to flesh out in concrete terms how this manifests itself in the world of the Greeks. Both in its poetic form and in its mythological content Greek culture succeeded in banishing the nauseous from its cultural consciousness, instead hiding it under the mask of the olympian pantheon and the Homeric epic. Indeed one can conduct an archaeology of Greek mythology and see the sedimentation of different layers of Greek consciousness. For Nietzsche claims that the mythic victory of the 'light' Olympian gods over the titans mirrors the actual historical censorship exercised by the Greeks on themselves. 'In order to live, the Greeks had to create these gods, out of the direst need . . . the joyful olympian divine order was developed gradually from the original, titanic divine order of terror by that Apollinian impulse to beauty' (KSA 1 p. 36).

In the Homeric poems we see too a reflection of this same drive to transfiguration. What Rousseau had seen as a 'natural' and authentic harmony of humans with their environment, the nostalgia for which Schiller terms 'naive', turns out to be the final victory of the Apollinian illusion. The apparent artlessness of the Homeric poems is produced by the ability of the epic to hide its own illusory nature. The simulacrum of the epic poem has displaced the 'Real', and in its transfigurative function has become the desired object, desired because of its ability to make good the primordial lack. Nietzsche says of the Greeks 'in order to idealise themselves, they had to see their reflection in a higher sphere . . . This is the sphere of beauty, where they saw their reflected images, the Olympians. With this reflection of beauty the Hellenic "Will" fought against the artistically correlative talent for suffering . . .' (KSA 1 p. 37-8). Hence the world of the Greeks is lifted up, in Homer, out of its condition of everyday anxiety and suffering into the timeless, eternally laughing world of the Olympians.

This self-effacement of the art work, which naturalises what is an illusory product of art (in the sense of both art-ificial and art-istic) is to be found repeated in the ideology of the pastoral, which Nietzsche notes to be an essential element in modern culture. It is an image of nature which refuses to acknowledge its own imaginary status, but rather claims to disclose the 'natural', unaffected by the trappings of civilisation as in the naive optimism of Rousseau. Nietzsche notes 'That idyllic shepherd of modern Man is merely a portrait of the sum of educational illusions which count for him as nature' (ibid.).

In all his remarks concerning the beautiful, or the Apollinian, Nietzsche is in many respects echoing the ideas of Schiller. Schiller had noted the danger of lingering too long on the merely beautiful representation, in that it makes us overly

dependent on its sensuous form. The goal of aesthetic education was to employ the sensuous representation in order to go *beyond* such that a higher truth might be disclosed. In Nietzsche too, although notions of the super-sensuous have no place in the narrative of *The Birth of Tragedy*, the rule of the Apollinian, although a necessary fiction, is a dangerous one when given free reign. The result is the potentially dangerous exclamation 'It is a dream, I want to dream more.' It represents only one side of the dialectic. Its attempts to censor the ineffable, no matter how rigorous, will eventually fail, and hence the other, Dionysian, drive will demand to be represented.

Within *The Birth of Tragedy* there is a double negation of the Dionysian as part of the dialectic which creates Greek culture. The first negation, both logically and temporally, is what Sloterdijk in his book on Nietzsche terms 'Dorian pre-censorship'. With this we are brought back to the problem of articulating the inarticulable. Before the entry of the Dionysian into Greek culture, it is already engaged in a dialectic with the Apollinian *before* the second sublation of the Dionysian and the Apollinian in tragedy itself.

The Dionysian, as preserved in the myths of the arrival of Dionysus in Greece from the East, originates from beyond the sphere of Greek culture, though Nietzsche is not interested in the facts concerning the historical origins of the cult of Dionysus. For Greek culture in *The Birth of Tragedy* stands as a cipher for human culture in general, just as the Orient serves to symbolise the pre-cultural, by which is to be understood that stage of human existence prior to the capacity for the production of discursive meaning in the world, and hence prior to the establishment of any specific régime of truth. This polarity of culture and the pre-cultural becomes clear through the terms Nietzsche uses to describe the Dionysian rites of Babylon, which represent a 'regression of human to tiger or ape' (KSA 1 p. 32). So too when he first introduces the Dionysian, Nietzsche stresses the fact that it transgresses the boundaries between human and animal. He notes that 'The chariot of Dionysus is covered in flowers and garlands: the panther and the tiger stride under his yoke . . . all the stiff . . . distinctions fall apart' (KSA 1 p. 29). The Dionysian represents the dissolution of the subject, or the principium individuationis as Nietzsche calls it, following Schopenhauer. Yet this condition is not a characteristic of a more authentic culture, and *The Birth of Tragedy* is far from being an exercise in Rousseauesque nostalgia, indeed by the terms of its own argument, in its exposure of the ideology of pastoralism, it cannot be. This condition which Nietzsche is attempting to symbolise obtains prior to the birth of culture.

In its dissolution of all the barriers set up by culture this pre-Hellenic Dionysian state is what Nietzsche will later describe as 'Becoming' or 'Life'.

Strictly speaking one should not even call it the Dionysian, for the metaphor of the 'Dionysian' which Nietzsche uses indicates that it has already been inserted into the symbolic order. In order to speak of the Dionysian, Dorian pre-censorship has already taken place. Hence there is always already representation, humans are always captives of their semiotic universe. One might go even further and claim, against the orthodox view, that the Dionysian, as a metaphor for 'reality' is always secondary. To put it in mythological terms, the father of Dionysus is none other than Zeus, the head of the Olympian pantheon, and hence of the whole Apollinian order too. The sense of nausea which the human existential predicament produces, and which the slick world of Apollinian forms and values endeavours to hide, is the result of a particular way of imagining the human condition. As Nietzsche develops his thoughts about art, knowledge and morality, we see that this nausea need never have existed. Not because it can be hidden by some reassuring illusion, but because it is itself a response to a prior illusory representation, namely, that an absence of stability in the world should make it an object of anxiety. Leaving behind the heritage of Schopenhauerian Kulturpessimismus, art will later become a much more affirmative activity.

The arrival of the 'Dionysian', and the concomitant Dorian pre-censorship, is important for another reason too. To understand why and how we must look at the passage where Nietzsche describes this Dorian response to the Oriental intruder. He writes the following: 'For a while they were completely secure and protected from the feverish stirrings of those (i.e. Dionysian) festivals . . . by . . . the figure of Apollo, who could hold out Medusa's head towards no more dangerous power than this grotesque and barbaric Dionysian force. It is in Doric art that the Apollinian majestic posture of refusal has immortalised itself. Yet this resistance became questionable, even impossible once similar impulses grew out of the deepest roots of Hellenic culture: now the power of the Delphic god was restricted to depriving this mighty opponent of his destructive weapons by an act of reconciliation, concluded at the right time. This reconciliation is the most important moment in the history of this Greek cult . . . ' (KSA 1 p. 32). The crucial event in this semi-mythic, semi-historical narrative is the failure of the Apollinian impulse of Doric art to completely suppress the Dionysian drive. The relation between the two alters from one where the Dionysian is excluded, to a new relation of compromise, where Apollo is engaged solely in damage limitation. Dionysus has been awarded his place on Olympus.

Now underneath this mythology Nietzsche is making claims regarding the limitations of the Apollinian analogous to those of Schiller concerning the beautiful. We recall that for Schiller the danger was of becoming too absorbed in the beautiful, and hence too dependent on the sensuous, material world. If this occurs then

one remains trapped in the world of the contingent, the demand to be able to exercise free will remains unfulfilled. Thus when confronted with the fact of human sensuous finitude, even the beautiful form or work of art will eventually fail to provide metaphysical consolation. So too the purely Apollinian representation, although it endeavours to create a world of illusory forms which banish any existential anxiety, cannot but fail in its task. As makers of meaning, humans will always come up against that limit, where the fragility of meaning is revealed, where its shaky foundations will finally give way. At this point the Apollinian must effect a compromise with the Dionysian recognition of the meaninglessness of the universe. Nietzsche writes of the Apollinian Greek, 'his whole existence full of beauty and proportion rested on a hidden underground of suffering and the knowledge which was uncovered by the Dionysian. And look ! Apollo could not survive without Dionysus !' (KSA 1 p. 40).

Having reached this stage of the argument, we also come up against the weaknesses of Nietzsche's own prose. For in interpreting *Birth of Tragedy* one becomes aware of the sheer burden of meaning which Nietzsche imposes on his text. It attempts to be both mythological and historical, both philological and philosophical. Above all there is an extraordinary seepage of meaning from the terms Apollinian and Dionysian. We have now concluded that the Apollinian, despite its seductive illusions, will be revealed for what it is, mere representation. Thereupon it must enter into a compromise with the deeper wisdom of the Dionysian. Yet as I have suggested above the Dionysian can only become an object of consciousness as an Apollinian representation. This too is narrated by the story of the Dorian pre-censorship. Can the two be reconciled ? In spite of the difficulties which Nietzsche creates for the interpreter there are grounds for attempting a reconciliation of these two apparently contradictory statements.

The term 'Apollinian' has two meanings. The first refers to the human impulse to make meaning wherever they find none. The Apollinian is the possibility of forming representations of the world. (I leave the nature of these representations deliberately indistinct, since although Nietzsche is most obviously implying works of art, the term could also include mental representations). The second meaning of Apollinian implies a specific *kind* of representation, namely one which attempts a false naturalisation of the human representing activity. It is a representation which refuses to acknowledge its status as such, but instead masquerades as reality. Hence it can be seen as a *mis* -representation.

If we turn to the Dionysian, then under the first meaning of the Apollinian, it too is an Apollinian representation. As I noted earlier, one would have to conclude that the Apollinian must in some sense be considered to be prior to the Dionysian. However, the Dionysian also refers to a *type* of representation, and it is

in considering how this type representation differs from the Apollinian, and moreover how it can be related to theories of the sublime. To understand how Dionysian representation differs from Apollinian, one must examine its function within Greek lyric and the dithyramb.

Within the history of Greek literature, the birth of lyric poetry in the figure of Archilochus is always regarded as an extraordinary event. For the first time there is an authorial voice which proclaims itself as such. Additionally, in the surviving fragments of Archilochus there appear to be elements of his own biography included. One need only compare him with Homer, whose poems begin with an invocation to the muse or the goddess to tell or sing the story to realise the difference. In the Homeric poems the poet enacts a self-effacement by relegating himself to the status of a mouthpiece of the narrating divinity, and then the authorial voice retreats into the background of the narrative, in a second self-effacing gesture.

Nietzsche, however, influenced by Schopenhauer whom he quotes at length, imagines there to be something more subtle at work. Far from presenting the fortified ego, the principium individuationis, for the first time in literary history through the strident subjectivity of the author, Archilochus is doing precisely the opposite. In portraying the lyric voice as one full of contradictions, paradoxes and conflicting desires, in short as a collection of heterogeneous elements, Archilochus is revealing the shortcomings of the notion of an individuated authorial voice. As Nietzsche says 'The 'I' of the lyric poet thus resounds from the abyss of Being: his 'subjectivity', in the sense of the more recent aestheticians, is a delusion' (KSA 1 p. 44). In other words Archilochus is using a representation of a strong authorial individual voice, and at the same time undermining the authority of that representation. One need not go as far as assuming that he is denying any notion of subjectivity per se, but rather, as I have suggested in my second chapter, of the strong, neatly individuated rational subject. Nietzsche adds 'In truth Archilochus, the man who is passionately fired by love and hate is merely a vision of genius, who is no longer Archilochus, but world genius, who expresses his primordial pain symbolically through the allegory of Archilochus the person' (KSA 1 p. 45).

In examining subjectivity in lyric, I am not interested in subjectivity per se, but rather in the importance it has for defining the Dionysian representation. Following Nietzsche's account we can see that the lyric poet sets up a representation vested with authority (after all, who could be more authoritative about Archilochus's desires than Archilochus the poet ?) only then to reveal this representation to be just a representation, full of flaws and weaknesses. Thus the Dionysian representation seems to be performing a reflexive act, undermining its own status. We can see, too, with regard to subjectivity how it is that Homer's poems are firmly entrenched within the realm of the Apollinian. For although the authorial

voice effaces itself in the act of narrating, this is a deceptive, and superficial difference. More importantly within the poems, no representation is ever shown to be inadequate to its object. In particular the poems are dominated by unified, fortified egos, which survive unchanged after death. In the *Odyssey* Odysseus visits the underworld and encounters a number of figures who were living in the *Iliad*, and who are exactly the same, bar their lamentable circumstance. The souls of Agamemnon and Achilles are perfectly lucid and rational, a fact which provides their pathos.

Following this interpretation we can see clearly the difference between the Apollinian and Dionysian representation. Put quite simply, the Apollinian representation refuses to renounce its claim to be a surrogate reality, whereas the Dionysian representation performs the reverse operation, and draws attention to the fact that it is a representation. Already the descent of the Dionysian from the sublime is becoming clearer. To recapitulate, the sublime in Kant and Schiller, though not in Schopenhauer, described the feeling engendered by an aesthetic object which pointed towards the inadequacy of sensuous representation or the human sensuous condition, but simultaneously disclosed the higher, super-sensuous truth of the self. It was a feeling of pain and pleasure intermingled. In Nietzsche, such humanist talk of the moral higher super-sensuous self is anomalous, yet the function of the Dionysian is similarly aimed at revealing the limitations of representation. In the terms of Nietzsche's critique of Schopenhauer's essentialism, there can be no direct comparison of the representation and the true metaphysical 'essence' of the world. At best it can be done purely negatively, as in the lyric of Archilochus, by disclosing the paradoxes and self-contradictions at work within the object.¹⁹

Having thus suggested a way of differentiating the Apollinian and the Dionysian, one must go further and examine how these two forms of representing occur in tragedy, and how it is that tragedy can become an affirmative art, given the stress hitherto on the purely negative aspects of Nietzsche's sublime.

Nietzsche begins his discussion of tragedy proper with an analysis of the historic origin of the tragic form, in the main following Aristotle's genealogy of tragedy, who traces it back to the dithyramb, a primitive narrative verse form, of which no examples survive. This retrieval of the satyric chorus of course represents a return to the strictly *Dionysian* origins of drama, where the satyr acts as the counterpart of the Apollinian pastoral shepherd. One notes Dionysian, because the satyr shows all the illusions of culture for what they are; his is a primitive variety of Ideologiekritik. As Nietzsche says 'The satyr was something sublime and divine . . . here the illusion of culture was wiped away from the archetypal idea of humanity' (KSA 1 p. 58). Inasmuch as the satyr caused the ideologically permeated image of humanity to 'shrink into a mendacious caricature' (ibid.) the Dionysian

satyr was more truthful, because less deceiving and self-deluding. Yet this alone did not constitute tragic drama, for this would place tragedy on the same level as lyric, as a product of the first entry of Dionysus into the representative order of Apollo. What occurs in tragedy is a second sublation of Apollo and Dionysus, but this time not Apollo in the sense of the capacity to render the world meaningful through representations per se, but in the second sense of the drive to wilfully hide the world through beautiful forms. It is a classically Hegelian move, since both elements are negated and preserved at the same time, though neither is unchanged.

Formally the synthesis occurs with the introduction of action into the dithyramb, whereupon it becomes drama for the first time. Nietzsche envisages that the drama occurred when Dionysus appeared on stage rather than being the absent referent of the dithyrambic narrative. This moment represents the first element of the dialectic, for Dionysus now speaks in the language of Apollo: Nietzsche notes 'as an epic hero, almost in the language of Homer' (KSA 1 p. 64). Keeping in line with the philological tradition, Nietzsche observes that originally tragedy was exclusively concerned with the sufferings of Dionysus, hence its restriction to the celebrations and festivals in his honour, but moreover adds that while in the extant tragedies the concerns seem to be with other mythical figures such as Heracles, the house of the Atreids, Medea and the like, it is certain 'that all the famous figures of the Greek stage Prometheus, Oedipus etc. are merely masks of that original hero Dionysus' (KSA 1 p. 71). In other words they are all symbols of the same phenomenon, namely that beneath the illusory and beautiful forms of the Apollinian, there is another wisdom which recognises the suffering and nausea which acknowledgement of the meaninglessness of the world can engender.

With this conclusion we are brought back to the problematics which I noted earlier, namely the problem of reconciling the need for a meaningful universe with apparent lack of any system of values to offer security or certainty. We see this dramatically presented in *Oedipus Tyrannos* and *Antigone*, as well as in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, where the hero suffers punishment for an apparently innocuous transgression of a completely arbitrary law, such that one is led to the conclusion that 'Everything present at hand is just and unjust and in both cases equally justified' (ibid.). However although the deceptive and self-satisfied Apollinian wisdom of Oedipus has been shown to be flawed, indeed with disastrous consequences, this is not a sufficient response. For were we to rest with the simple admission that our values are flawed, there would be the risk of the descent into Nihilism, a prospect which Nietzsche viewed with horror. The clue to the affirmative aspect of tragedy must be sought in section nine, which I shall quote at length. The subject of the passage is Oedipus 'who is destined to error and misery in spite of his wisdom, but who through his monstrous suffering finally exercises

a magical beneficent force, which remains potent after his departure. The noble person does not sin, the profound poet intends to say: through his action every law, every natural order, indeed the moral world may well go to ground, yet precisely by virtue of this action a higher magical circle of effects is drawn, which found a new world on the ruins of the old one which has been toppled' (KSA 1 p. 65). Later on, when discussing the play *Oedipus at Colonus* which depicts the old Oedipus shortly before his death, Nietzsche informs us that 'the hero performed his highest activity in his purely passive behaviour' (KSA 1 p. 66).

Here, if anywhere Nietzsche comes closest to the language of more traditional theories of the sublime in tragedy. Although Oedipus is annihilated by forces beyond human comprehension, his fate is nevertheless not an ignoble one. Through his passivity, through his willing acceptance of his fate he exudes an aura, and provides the impetus for others to reconstruct the world which has been torn apart by the events on stage. Like the Schillerian tragic hero, Oedipus refuses to be daunted by the coming calamity, but instead continues questioning about his own past, in attempt to save the city he rules. Moreover if one turns to Antigone one notes an actual will to self-destruct. Antigone refuses all the opportunities to save her life, and instead defiantly steers the same course into oblivion. So too Prometheus, who also features in the same section of the book, steals the gift of fire fully aware that he will be punished by the gods, thanks to his capacity for foreknowledge.

What one notes instantiated in all these examples is not a disclosure of some immortal soul which will survive, but simply the capacity to remained undaunted by the overwhelming powers of the world. Echoing Schiller, there is implicit in Nietzsche the belief that one can only truly render life bearable by confronting its most nauseating aspects. Schiller had emphasised the responsibility of moral culture to present a mimesis of nature at its worst in order to achieve genuine moral enlightenment. So too in *The Birth of Tragedy* the annihilation of the tragic hero is a necessary process. By actually willing his or her downfall, the tragic hero can make light of the human existential predicament, in an act of sublime mockery of all that threatens to disrupt human life. For this reason too, though it remains undeclared, Nietzsche associates the sublime with the comic. Unlike Schopenhauer, who discourages laughter as a foolish affirmation of the will-to-live, Nietzsche sees the comic as a companion of the sublime, in its refusal to submit to the nausea of existence. Later in the text Nietzsche concludes in the same note that 'Dionysian art too intends to convince us of the eternal joy of existence: only we are to seek it not in appearances, but behind them' (KSA 1 p. 109), also repeating Schiller's reservations about attaching too much significance to the beautiful form. Hence we should express no surprise that Nietzsche should choose

the absurdly comic figure of the satyr as the archetypal Dionysian symbol, nor that historically during the festival of Dionysus the tragic poet was always required to submit, in addition to three tragedies, a comic satyr play. Not as light relief after the draining effect of watching a trilogy of tragic dramas, but rather as an indication of the double aspect of the Dionysian. As Nietzsche says 'The Olympian gods grew out of the smile of Dionysus, and humans out of his tears' (KSA 1 p. 72).

With Nietzsche's assertion of the internal unity of the tragic and the comic we are reminded of the theme of laughter which recurs throughout Nietzsche's œuvre. One finds the theme announced in the very title of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, variously translated as the *Gay* or *Joyful Science*, and one finds it repeated within the text of that work, where Nietzsche speaks of the eternal comedy of existence' (KSA 3 p. 372), commenting that the moralist 'does not at all want us to laugh at existence, neither at ourselves nor at him' (ibid. p. 371). One finds the theme prominent, too, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as John Lippitt has recently shown.²⁰ For the parable of the metamorphosis from camel to lion to child, with which Nietzsche opens the first book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is supplemented with Zarathustra's declaration in the fourth book that 'higher, stronger, more victorious, more joyful men, such as are square-built in body and soul: *laughing* lions must come' (KSA 4 p. 351) as a prelude to the advent of the child-like Übermensch. Zarathustra asks, for example, 'Who of you can both laugh and be elevated at the same time? Whoever climbs onto the highest mountains laughs at all tragedies' (ibid. p. 49).

Nietzsche's allusion to the theme of the comic in *The Birth of Tragedy*, a theme which will have so much significance for his later thinking, once again reminds us of the debt his thinking owes to the theory of the sublime. Raimonda Modiano has pointed out²¹ the importance to the Romantics and to philosophers including Hegel and Vischer, of seeing the unity of the comic and the sublime, noting, for example, that 'the comic needs the sublime for its survival, for otherwise it would lose the very contrast between ideality and mundane existence which defines its special dialectical character' (p. 241). So too in Nietzsche, the theme of laughter stems from the problematics of sublimity thrown up by the tragic world view, and is paradoxically invested with special significance. For Nietzsche comedy is a matter of great seriousness.

If we chose to rest with the above account, however, we would be entitled to regard Nietzsche as in some sense merely continuing the project bequeathed by Kant, Idealism, Romanticism and perhaps even Vischer (whom he mentions in the first *Untimely Meditation*) albeit denuded of the Christian moral sentiment of those predecessors. Yet this would be solely to heed the Dionysian side of the equation. The Apollinian side, which has been both negated and preserved, remains under-

represented, and it is this which distinguishes Nietzsche's tragic theory from that of those others. It additionally provides a connection between this early work on tragedy and his later critique of metaphysics in the name of language and interpretation.

Commenting on the consequence of the tragic treatment of the Oedipus myth Nietzsche notes that in addition to the aura which Oedipus' behaviour and destruction projects, and which might be termed the feeling of the sublime elicited in the spectators, there is also an awareness to build anew on the foundations of the ruined world to which Oedipus belongs. With this architectural metaphor Nietzsche is articulating the position of those who are left over after the calamitous events have run their course. In other words, in the knowledge that the semiotic web of the universe is one which has limits, and given that we will inevitably come up against those limits, what is to be done? Are we to follow the Oedipal ethic and embrace the pure negation of all semiosis, *tout court*? As my account of Nietzsche's concerns in the first two chapters suggests, the answer would be no, and for two principle reasons.

First, in *The Birth of Tragedy* as well as in his more specifically anti-metaphysical work Nietzsche repeatedly stresses the impossibility of renouncing all forms of normativity. What enhances life is not the absence of norms, perspectives and so forth, but rather the self-conscious adoption of certain perspectives over others, and as we have seen, what is so problematic about metaphysics is not the fact that it is a perspective, but that it is a narrow one, allowed to become ossified. This is why the 'death of god', to borrow Nietzsche's metonym, is greeted by many not as so much liberation, but rather with a distinct sense of horror evolving into passive Nihilism. Thus after the dramatic catastrophe there must take place an act of reconstruction and rebuilding. The loss of one perspective anticipates only the establishment of another, more life enhancing one. As I have argued in the last chapter, the free spirit is not one that gives itself up entirely to non-sense, but rather one that lives perpetually on the edge between meaning and non-meaning, and it is this ability to conduct life as an experiment (Nietzsche uses the word 'Versuch') which is to be seen as a mark of strength.

Second, there occurs in tragedy the highly symbolic act of expulsion which excludes the tragic hero from the sphere of the social. Sublime ridicule of the human condition may be possible for the rare individual, such as Prometheus or Oedipus, but it is not possible for the whole community. The parallels between the tragic hero and the *Übermensch* should be quite clear. For example, upon revelation that Oedipus' fate has been fulfilled, he is literally cast out from the community, so that the city can continue to exist. In other words the continued presence of Oedipus within Thebes threatens to disrupt the entire social order. As Jean-Pierre

Vernant notes, Oedipus 'is from then on "apolis"; he incarnates the figure of the excluded. In his solitude, he appears at once not yet human, a wild beast, a savage monster, and beyond the human, bearer of a formidable religious qualification, like a "daimon".'²² Similarly at the end of *Antigone*, Creon, though admittedly the anti-hero, demands to be expelled from the city, to save it from the desolation inflicting it. Finally in *Prometheus Bound* Aeschylus uses abundant spatial metaphors to emphasise the isolation of Prometheus from society, and indeed beyond the bounds of the entire known world.

It should be apparent that although Dionysian wisdom will break through, as symbolised by the fate of the tragic protagonist there is a simultaneous recognition of the necessity of Apollinian illusions. We cannot discard them like Oedipus. It seems that the final lesson of tragedy is this: the Apollinian world of illusion is all we have, and it is not possible to step outside of it; we must instead use it to the best possible ends. The catastrophe on the tragic stage teaches us of the fragility of goodness and of all other values: it alerts us to a constant reassessment of the truth régime under which we live. As in the never-ending dialectic of knowledge I outlined in Chapter one, tragedy presents a constant challenge to self-criticism and appraisal. Moreover it is a lesson which remains relevant for Nietzsche's contemporaries, for the ancient paradigm represents a 'healthy' response to the human condition, one avoiding the Nihilism Nietzsche anticipated in the late nineteenth century.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have thus focused on two themes concerning *The Birth of Tragedy*. The first has been to understand the work within the history of eighteenth and nineteenth century theories of the sublime, in order to map out its relation to and reception of the dialectical structure sublimity as it evolves into a theory of tragedy in the hands of Schiller. While not wanting to assimilate Nietzsche's thinking to that of the earlier thinkers discussed during the course of the chapter, it is nevertheless important to recognise that *The Birth of Tragedy* was written as a response to a particular set of concerns and their history.

The second theme governing the argument of this chapter has been a desire to analyse the relation between *The Birth of Tragedy* and Nietzsche's wider critique of metaphysics. As I have suggested above, the dialectic of Apollo and Dionysus articulates a problem which mobilises Nietzsche's entire philosophy of interpretation. One might be tempted to conclude that Nietzsche's philosophy thus represents an extended commentary on the theory of the sublime. It would be premature, however, to use *The Birth of Tragedy* as the sole reference point for an

understanding of Nietzsche's writing on art, for I shall be discussing in the following chapters the ways in which many of the concerns expressed in this early work come to be either rejected or at least substantially reformulated. It is to Nietzsche's subsequent development that I now turn.

Notes;

¹ Young, *op. cit.*

² Mihailo Djuric, *Nietzsche und die Metaphysik* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985) p. 188.

³ See Mihailo Djuric and Josef Simon (hrsg.) *Kunst und Wissenschaft bei Nietzsche* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1986).

⁴ Paul de Man, 'Genesis and Genealogy (Nietzsche)' in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) pp. 79-102

⁵ See Henry Staten, 'The Birth of Tragedy Reconstructed' in *Studies in Romanticism* 29 (1990) and Thomas Böning's 'Literaturwissenschaft im Zeitalter des Nihilismus? Paul de Mans Nietzsche-Lektüre', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift* 64 (1990).

⁶ See, for example, Samuel Monk's seminal study *The Sublime. A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), or Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

⁷ Longinus, *On Sublimity* trans. D. A. Russell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) p. 2.

⁸ Peter de Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) p. 36 ff.

⁹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* ed. J. Boulton (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) p. 57.

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. G. Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952) § 28.

¹¹ With the reworking of Kant's aesthetic by Schiller the groundwork is prepared for the philosophies of art which dominate the nineteenth century. As Peter Szondi notes ('Antike und Moderne in der Ästhetik der Goethezeit' in Szondi, *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie* hrsg. S. Metz & H.-H. Hildbrandt [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974] p. 145 ff.), Kant's aesthetic is still firmly in the mould of the psychologising aesthetic theories of Burke, Shaftesbury or Hutcheson, who are more interested in the *feeling* aroused by the object than by any inherent characteristics it may possess. However where Szondi might be criticised is in his assertion that Friedrich Schlegel was the first to leave the Enlightenment 'Wirkungsästhetik' behind, for as I have suggested, Schiller's role is pivotal in seeing aspects of subjective experience objectified in the formal structure of the artwork.

¹² Friedrich Schiller, *Werke* hrsg. L. Blumenthal & B. von Wiese (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1962) 'On the Sublime' refers to the essay 'Über das Erhabene' in volume 20 of the *Werke* and not the roughly contemporaneous 'Vom Erhabenen' in volume 21, where the other essays 'On the Ba-

sis of the Enjoyment of Tragic Objects' and 'On Tragic Art' appear. The edition will be abbreviated in the text as *SW*.

¹³As Gary Shapiro has observed, this privilege of the sublime is a typical feature of modernist poetics, where the beautiful is seen as inevitably having to give way to the terror of sublimity, since it is an unsustainable illusion, a view Shapiro sees exemplified in a line from one of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, where Rilke writes 'For the beautiful is nothing / but the start of terror we can hardly bear [Denn das Schöne ist nichts / als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen]. See Shapiro, 'From the Sublime to the Political: Some Historical Notes', *New Literary History* 16 (1985).

¹⁴A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1958) Vol. I p. 202. This edition will be subsequently referred to as *WWR* in the text.

¹⁵Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. M. Eldred (London: Verso, 1988). Sloterdijk subsequently employs the term in his own work on Nietzsche and tragedy, *Thinker on Stage*, trans. J. O. Daniel (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1990).

¹⁶For an account of the metaphor of knowing as making from Descartes onwards see David Lachterman, *The Ethics of Geometry. A Genealogy of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁷It at no time occurs to de Man to use the Nachlaß notes from the period of *The Birth of Tragedy* to revise his reading of the latter.

¹⁸See, for example, *The World as Will and Representation* I § 36 ff.

¹⁹It will have become clear that while for Kant, Schiller and Schopenhauer the aesthetic object can be either natural or a product of human artifice, for Nietzsche it is merely to be seen as the work of art.

²⁰John Lippitt, 'Nietzsche, Zarathustra and the Status of Laughter', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 32 (1992).

²¹Raimonda Modiano, 'Humanism and the Comic Sublime: From Kant to Friedrich Theodor Vischer', *Studies in Romanticism* 26 (1987).

²²J-P Vernant, "Ambiguity and Reversal: Oedipus Rex" in E. Segal (ed.) *Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) p. 195. The Greek 'apolis' means 'cityless' while 'daimon' denotes any unspecified minor deity, such as Socrates claimed to have spoken to him through his inner voice.

Immanence and Transcendence. On Aesthetic Redemption

In the years following the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche comes either to reject much of its content, or to at least express reservations about the manner of its presentation. Quite apart from his later sense of disaffection with Wagner and the real significance of the Wagnerian project, he recognises that so many of the important insights of his first book, most especially his 'discovery' of the Dionysian and Apollinian artistic drives, is hindered by the vocabulary used to formulate them. Both in the 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism' with which he prefaced the second edition of the work in 1886, and in his later account of it in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche is all too aware that at the time of composition he was still responding to the influence of Idealist and Schopenhauerian metaphysics. This is not to imply that the early Nietzsche was an Idealist, for as I have suggested in previous chapters his early writings do indicate the existence of a considerable distance between the young Nietzsche and Schopenhauer.

However, while there are these substantial differences between the two (and in the last chapter I have demonstrated these) Nietzsche was still obliged to employ the metaphysical vocabulary inherited from his predecessors. As Nietzsche comments in the 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism': 'How very much I now regret that I did not have the courage (or immodesty ?) at that time to permit myself in every respect a personal language for such personal views and ventures - that with Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulae I laboriously sought to express alien and novel evaluations, which were fundamentally opposed to the spirit, and equally the taste, of Kant and Schopenhauer !' (KSA 1 p. 19). As I have suggested previously, though Nietzsche's reading of tragedy diverges significantly from Schopenhauer, much of its conceptual shape is informed by the aesthetics of both Kant and Schopenhauer, with particular regard to their theories of the sublime. Yet, as Nietzsche comments on Schopenhauer's doctrine of tragic resignation, 'How differently Dionysus spoke to me ! How far removed from me was just this whole resignationism at the time !' (ibid. p. 20).

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche acknowledges the Hegelian organisation of much of the argument of *the Birth of Tragedy*, resulting in a seeming untimeliness: 'I thought these problems through while serving as an orderly during cold September nights in front of the walls of Metz: one could well believe rather that the tract was 50 years older . . . it reeks offensively Hegelian . . . An "Idea" - the opposition Dionysian and Apollinian - translated into metaphysical terms; history itself as the development of this "Idea"; the opposition sublated into a synthesis by tragedy . . .'

(KSA 6 p. 310). As I have argued previously, though, while Nietzsche recognises his early debt to Hegel, it is not one he easily pays off, since he never fully manages to disburden himself of the weight of the latter's thought. Nietzsche's own late remarks in *Ecce Homo* thus have to be received with a certain degree of caution.

In reflection what preoccupies Nietzsche more with *The Birth of Tragedy* than this matter of 'mere' style however, is the readiness he displayed in assimilating his hope for a cultural renewal to the artistic project of Wagner. As he notes in the 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism', far worse than corrupting the thought of the Dionysian by forcing it into the strait-jacket of Schopenhauer's vocabulary was the fact 'that I ruined the grandiose Greek problem, as it unfolded in front of me, by mixing in the most modern things. That I had pinned my hopes where there was nothing to hope for, where everything pointed all too clearly towards an ending' (KSA 1 p. 20). In the last third of the work Nietzsche equates the Wagnerian 'Gesamtkunstwerk' and its putative dialectical synthesis of music and text, with the tragic drama, whose unity of Apollinian and Dionysian performs an analogous function. Against this Nietzsche contrasts the wholly 'unaesthetic', 'Socratic' tradition of opera since Monteverdi, which in its demand for textual intelligibility fully subordinates the music to the libretto.

Since Greek tragedy had performed a function of personal and cultural redemption and consolation, so Nietzsche reasoned, the opera of Wagner could accomplish a similar task for modern culture and save it from the encroachment of Nihilism. That this hope was a misguided one is recognised early by Nietzsche, since he subsequently sees in Wagner's work symptoms of that modern decadence which he hoped a renewal of tragic, or Dionysian wisdom would combat. What he is not prepared to admit to in the two works quoted from however, is the internal relation between his choice of metaphysical vocabulary and the enthusiasm for Wagnerian opera. The one entails the other, most particularly in the attitude it shapes towards the problem of redemption. The question which informs both Wagner's work and Nietzsche's later violent disagreement with him is whether or not redemption implies transcendence. More importantly, Nietzsche's answer to this question turns out to be central to his criticism of metaphysics and especially to his understanding of art.

The Meaning of Transcendence

In my account of *The Birth of Tragedy* I drew attention to the manner in which Nietzsche absorbs and reacts to the eighteenth and nineteenth century theories of the sublime. Not only does the opposition between the Apollinian and the Dionysian

through its very function recall the well-known pairing of the Beautiful and the Sublime, particularly as this distinction is developed in Schiller. Additionally, the artistic forms which Nietzsche characterises as objectifications of the two artistic impulses show little divergence from those artistic forms which have an analogous function in the art theories of the Romantics, of Hegel and of Schopenhauer. For Nietzsche the artistic form which exemplifies the Apollinian will-to-form is sculpture, a claim which repeats both Schopenhauer's understanding of Beauty as the will to make permanent, and Hegel's interpretation of Greek sculpture as the only stage in the history of art when Beauty was achieved (i.e. when the sensuous manifestation was adequate to the Idea). Similarly, the Dionysian artistic form is best exemplified in Nietzsche's eyes by music, an interpretation which draws on Schopenhauer's own metaphysics of music, itself influenced by the Romantic understanding of music as the one ideal artistic form which can best symbolise the infinite.¹

The purpose of this comparison is not to belittle the achievement or deny the originality of *the Birth of Tragedy*. Rather it is to enable us to focus on a feature which Nietzsche's book is in danger of sharing with these earlier authors; a feature which Nietzsche's Idealist vocabulary encourages us to see when reading the book, and which draws Nietzsche (mistakenly) to the artistic output of Wagner. I am referring to the interpretation of aesthetic experience, and most especially the sublime, as a means to redemptive transcendence. In Kant, and more markedly in Schiller and Schopenhauer, the sublime is an occasion for authentically moral behaviour, when one can transcend the limitations of sensuous existence. For Kant and Schiller, the sublime offers a chance to act as a moral being, which they both see as a higher calling than the everyday demands of physical embodied existence. Indeed for Schiller, one's moral behaviour is only regarded as truly moral if pursued and accomplished at the cost of one's sensuous being. So too in Schopenhauer, the sublime offers an opportunity to escape from the relentless strivings of the Will and of embodied existence, and to gain a penetrating insight into the true 'metaphysical' reality of the world. Not that Schopenhauer is interested in morality or the challenge of truly authentic moral conduct, for the very idea of a moral agent is absurd, given the deluded nature of all notions of selfhood, in short, the principium individuationis.

Despite these differences, however, the feature shared by all three thinkers is the idea that redemption can be achieved through a negation of the sensuous world, through an act of transcendence. In Schopenhauer the figure who develops the ideal pattern of behaviour is consequently the ascetic, whose knowledge of the vanity of all egoism and willing leads him to a voluntary renunciation of all aspects of his material existence. Schopenhauer writes that 'The will now turns away from

life; it shudders at the pleasures in which it recognises the affirmation of life. Man attains to the state of voluntary renunciation, resignation, true composure and complete willlessness' (WWR I § 68 p. 379).

Yet although Nietzsche's interpretation bears a formal resemblance to Schopenhauer's theory of tragedy and of aesthetic experience in general it should have become clear that there are significant differences. Nietzsche's theory, as he notes in the later retrospective accounts of *The Birth of Tragedy*, is far from exhorting his readers to renounce all willing or any form of selfhood. His choice of Schopenhauer's vocabulary, his references to the Will, to 'das Ureine', the 'Primal Unity', masks significant differences. Likewise his account of the Dionysian state as one of intoxication ('Rausch'), where all the fortified boundaries of the self are broken down, should not be equated with Schopenhauer's dissolution of the self in a supreme moment of life-denying ascesis. As Heidegger observed, while the notion of 'Rausch' remains central to Nietzsche's understanding of art throughout his career, its meaning and function exceed the boundaries of the conceptual world of Schopenhauerian metaphysics, and it is not until Nietzsche develops his own style of thinking that a more adequate means of expression is found for his ideas. To explain why the two should be dissociated one must recall the general tenor of his critique of metaphysics, and in particular his critique of 'Platonism for the people', namely Christianity.

One of Nietzsche's more substantial criticisms of metaphysics was that the philosophical faith in logical categories leads to a petrification of life. The vital flux of Becoming is devalued and instead notions of Being, stability, in short, timelessness, are valued more highly. As Nietzsche notes, such desire for stability and unity results from a 'need for inertia' (KSA 12: 2 [117] p. 120), whereas the ability to accept ambiguity, constant change and the 'reversal of customary perspectives' (KSA 5 p. 364) constitutes a 'sign of strength' (KSA 12: 2 [117] p. 120). Commenting on Nietzsche's opposition to any such flight to timelessness, Josef Simon concludes that 'instead of being understood as "originary" law . . . the law of identity is to be understood as "having become" [geworden].'²

One of the principal causes of this process is a mis-recognition of what the vocabulary of logic, and language in general, signifies. The crucial error, for Nietzsche, is to have assumed language to actually refer to a pre-existing real, awaiting the correct term to be applied to it, rather than to recognise language, and logic in particular, as a semiotic system, a critique I have already outlined in the first chapter.

The reification and hypostatisation of language which Nietzsche identifies as one of the primary characteristics of the metaphysical tradition necessarily bequeaths to us a certain conception of time in its wake. The faith in the certainties

of grammar necessarily restricts a priori what can be considered to be an existent, and even what it means to exist. As I have demonstrated in the first chapter, the problem can be traced back to Socrates, whose apparently innocuous search for definitions, far from remaining a problem merely of semantics is transformed by Plato into one of ontology. The inability of mundane existence to offer anything which could fulfil Plato's desire for an adequate definition of such notions as 'good', 'true' or 'just' compels him to posit the truth of the matter as a world of atemporal forms, a move which is seen as necessary only on the basis of the following assumptions;

- a) that the 'good' is a real, and not just a quality predicated of actions, objects etc. In other words, for every word there is a corresponding existent.
- b) that the 'truth' about, e.g. the good must be singular, corresponding to the singularity of the word 'good' (or τὸ καλόν). Hence the impossibility of a plurality of 'goods', each with their own particular logic, an assumption which refuses to accept the metaphoric origins of conceptuality.
- c) that the 'truth' of goodness is temporally invariable and always present: just as we shall continue to employ the same word for 'good' in ten or fifty years, so too the 'truth' will be the same.

The combination of these three assumptions leads to the conclusion that an object can only truly exist if it is self-identical and not subject to temporal change. It is thus because of this assumption that Plato refuses to acknowledge the right to existence of the ephemeral things of this world.

It is an assumption inherited by Aristotle in his discussion of time in Book IV of *The Physics*. In this work Aristotle is puzzled by the paradox of time inasmuch as 'Some of it has been and is not, some of it is to be and is not yet.'³ From this observation he notes that 'it would seem to be impossible that what is composed of things that are not should not participate in being' (218^a 1-2). Yet as various commentators have objected, Aristotle's couching of the problem of time in these terms appears possible only on the premise that existence can only be predicated of something in the present, i.e. an object referred to in the present tense of the verb 'be'. Hence if we cannot say that something 'is' in the present, we must infer that it does not have full reality or existence, a conclusion which parallels Plato's argument that because mundane objects are brought into being and then decay with time, they therefore do not truly exist.⁴

The determination of existence as being-present, a determination which Derrida identifies as the 'metaphysics of presence' is what underlies the constant struggle for redemption which I have analysed above. For Nietzsche's analysis of metaphysical conceptions of time as derived from Aristotelian and Platonic ideas emphasises the melancholia inhabiting Western thinking, the sense of loss towards

time past which produces Antiquarian history, indiscriminately clutching on to the relics of the past, in a vain effort to bring the flow of life to a standstill. Even Hegel, who more than any other philosopher prior to Nietzsche could be said to display a sensitivity towards the problem of history, even Hegel subscribes to the same set of premisses. For the dialectic, though significant in its recognition of the historicity of knowledge, nevertheless projects itself toward totality, toward the final moment of static self-congruence.⁵

As a consequence of this rejection of time, and the desire to transcend time, metaphysical thinking thus seeks 'revenge' on the world, as Nietzsche puts it, by denying the flow of life. To do this successfully, it must 'invent' an other, truer world (Plato's world of forms, and in Christian terms, the kingdom of Heaven). Nietzsche notes in *Twilight of the Idols* that 'we take revenge on life with the phantasmagoria of an 'other', 'better' life' (KSA 6 p. 78). In the same work, Nietzsche undertakes his well-known genealogy of the metaphysical desire for transcendence in the section entitled 'How the "True World" eventually became a Fable', tracing notions such as the Kantian noumenal realm with its moral connotations back to their origins in the Platonic idea of 'The true world attainable for the wise man, the pious man, the virtuous man' (ibid. p. 80). Earlier in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche had seen the deluded metaphysical search for 'Truth' as a mere descendant of the general religious belief in the other world (implicitly of Salvation). In aphorism 151 he writes 'People have become accustomed to the idea of an 'other (further, lower, higher) world', and feel an uncomfortable sense of emptiness and loss upon the annihilation of religious delusion - and now this 'other world' springs up once more, but this time it is just a metaphysical one, and no longer a religious one' (KSA 3 p. 494).

In one of the notebooks of 1887, Nietzsche observes this tendency even in the work of Schopenhauer, who more than most metaphysicians had helped banish the hope of some form of redemptive transcendence. He writes that 'Around 1876 . . . I understood that my instinct was going in the opposite direction from that of Schopenhauer: towards a justification of life, even at its most terrible, ambiguous and deceptive . . . that an "in-itself-of-things" must necessarily be good, blessed, true and one. Against this Schopenhauer's interpretation of the In-itself as Will constituted an important step: only he did not understand how to deify this Will . . . Schopenhauer still stood so far under the dominion of Christian values that now, once the thing in itself was no longer "God", it had to be bad, stupid, absolutely contemptible' (KSA 12: 9[42] pp. 354-5). Hence Nietzsche's frequent diagnosis of 'Kulturpessimismus' as one of the many symptoms of the moral decay of Modernity.

Owing its origins to the metaphysical negation of the transient and the sensual, the notion of transcendence thus turns out to be enmeshed in the cultural and intellectual history of Western society. Both produced by and producing the slave morality of resentment, it finds itself recurring in many different areas of Western culture. The most obvious case is the explicit goal of redemption in Christian morality. The Christian ideal of Salvation represents an open declaration on the value of mundane life, by setting up a mendacious 'other' world. As Nietzsche comments in *The Antichrist* 'God deformed into a contradiction of this life instead of a transfiguration of it and eternal Yes. With God hostilities announced towards life, nature, the will to life ! God the formula for every defamation of the "Here and now", for every lie about the "Beyond" ! With God the deification of Nothing, the will to nothing pronounced sacred !' (KSA 6 p. 185).

Bound up with such a defamation of the 'Here and Now' is a concomitant rejection of all the material, sensuous aspects of human existence, and it is this which has remained, long after the authority of the Christian divinity has waned. Transformed from the religious sphere into that of science and metaphysics, the feeling of 'emptiness and loss' which Nietzsche had seen as accompanying the rejection of the Christian Heaven is more than supplemented by metaphysical notions of logic and truth. We have previously observed Nietzsche's criticisms of philosophy's persistent refusal to make room for the senses, focusing in particular on accounts of the subject, which appear to Nietzsche to be united in their opposition to allowing the body any role in determining human thinking, as if this might undermine the 'purity' of logical thought. In short, the target of Nietzsche's critique is the continued metaphysical belief in the Absolute after the death of God. The most obvious target would be Hegel, but it could equally apply to, say, the Cartesian attempt to begin with first principles in the search for the bedrock of certainty. Likewise with the sciences the implicit assumption is that the object of research is to discover that sacred grail of the 'Truth' about the world, beyond the limitations of the human sensorium. Yet at no time is the status of that knowledge, the status of the scientific paradigm *as such* ever brought into question.

Contra Wagner

In order to combat this metaphysical search for transcendence Nietzsche adopts a wide variety of strategies subsequent to *The Birth of Tragedy*, both linguistic and conceptual, which go some way towards the formation of what might be termed a philosophy of 'immanence'. Most obviously, Nietzsche's perspectivism is aimed at overcoming the belief in the possibility of a turn 'back to basics', whether it is

Descartes's reduction of everything extrinsic to the pure cogito, or the more recent phenomenological epoche of Husserl, with its positing of an Archimedean point to survey the workings of consciousness. One hesitates to call this anti-transcendental turn a critique of logocentrism, not only because of the historical impropriety of the term, but also because the strategies of the latter do not share the moral concerns of Nietzsche's 'immanentism'. More subtly, Nietzsche will come to employ a wide variety of linguistic devices, most especially a heavy use of physiological and corporeal metaphors, which once again bring the attention of the reader away from ideas of the transcendent and back to 'this-worldly' concerns. I shall deal with this interest in immanence shortly.

I suggested earlier that one of the principal reasons why the early Nietzsche largely misreads the significance of Schopenhauer and the Idealist heritage is that he himself still employs the language of that tradition. Similarity of language hides significant *intended* differences, and hence while Nietzsche may well later *claim* that he intended something other in his study of tragedy than the Schopenhauerian attitude of tragic resignation, its form of articulation in fact results in its being easily assimilated to the aesthetic of the earlier philosopher.

Nietzsche's misreading of Wagner is somewhat more complex, but it is also bound up with the composer's shared enthusiasm for Schopenhauer's metaphysics of music. As Tracy Strong has recently suggested,⁶ the grounds for Nietzsche's initial enthusiasm for Wagner may not necessarily lie in their shared interest in Schopenhauer, even though, as I shall argue, it was the eventual cause of their parting. Instead, Strong suggests, we should seek the reason for Nietzsche's early attraction to Wagner in the political role which the composer gives to art. In his essays *Art and Revolution* and *German Art and German Politics* Wagner stresses the crucial role which art should play in culture, arguing that it made possible an ennobling of 'public spiritual life.'

An emphasis on the political aspects of Wagner's understanding of the arts certainly makes sense of many aspects of *The Birth of Tragedy*, in particular the concern of Nietzsche with not only the renewal of the individual spectator of the drama, but also the central role occupied by tragic drama in sustaining the edifice of Greek culture as a whole. Additionally Nietzsche's extravagant claims made on behalf of Wagner are justified on the grounds of the *cultural* renewal and redemption which he sees as imminent. What has to be redeemed is not just the Socratic individual, but Socratic society as a whole. Modern society, Modernity, theoretical culture is the problem, and it is a phenomenon that can be redeemed by the communal aesthetic form of Wagnerian opera. As Nietzsche says, the world can only be justified as an aesthetic phenomenon.

However, the significance of Wagner goes further than this mere political appeal. For the relation of the two is largely determined by their individual responses to the metaphysics of music inherited from Schopenhauer. Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Wagner stems largely from his disillusionment with Modernity's self-imposed goal of scientific knowledge. In his account of the development of tragedy he sees the birth of Western theoretical culture at the moment when Socrates, as the archetypal 'theoretical' spectator, demands that the work be intelligible. Born less out of a hypertrophy of the Apollinian than out of a fundamentally extra-aesthetic impulse, this theoretical drive, or as Nietzsche terms it, 'Socratic optimism', appears on stage in the form of Euripidean drama, which subordinates all the symbolic elements of tragedy to the overarching demand for logical, intelligible discourse, hence the large number of set-piece debates in the plays of Euripides.

To stress still further the distinction between tragic and modern, theoretical, culture, he describes the goals of their artistic expression with different terminology. Nietzsche characterises tragic culture as 'the culture whose important mark is that of putting wisdom [Weisheit] as its highest goal instead of knowledge [Wissenschaft]' (KSA 1 p. 118). In other words, tragic culture aims at a symbolic, indeterminate, expression of its understanding of the world, since such an understanding *can* only be a symbolic one. Contrariwise, Socratic culture deludes itself in believing it can actually 'know' the world in intelligible, dialectical concepts. Hence the subordination of tragic symbol to discursive logic, a process which translated into the artistic production of Nietzsche's own time becomes the subordination of operatic music to text. Nietzsche writes, 'Answering the wish of the listener to understand the words being sung, the singer speaks rather than sings, and increases the expressive pathos of the words with this half-singing; through this increase in the pathos he facilitates comprehension of the words and overcomes that remaining half, the music' (KSA 1 p. 121).

In his unpublished notes from the same period as *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche claims that music, or as he calls it, the tonal basis of all speech, constitutes the condition of its meaning anything at all, when he writes that 'Inasmuch as that primal ground [i.e. the Will] is the same in all humans, so too is the hidden tonal ground the basis of the intelligible basis to the plurality of languages' (KSA 7: 12 [1] p. 361) drawing an explicit equation between the Will and pure tonality when he notes, further, that 'The consonantal-vocalic word relates to its tonal foundation as does our embodied being to that primal form of appearance, the Will' (ibid. p. 362).

Now although we have seen how Nietzsche differs from Schopenhauer inasmuch as he refers to the Will as a 'form of appearance' [Erscheinungsform], thereby recognising the Will to be already a *human* interpretation of the world's

primal ground, his notes of 1871, together with the later sections of *The Birth of Tragedy*, giving priority to music over text, nevertheless bring him close to Schopenhauer and to Wagner. He moreover professes to see in Wagner's work the rebirth of those very aesthetic impulses that were stifled with the advent of theoretical culture. For, as he notes later in the fourth of the *Untimely Meditations* 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth', Wagner not only reverses the traditional hierarchy pertaining to the relation of words and music. In his use of myth he mobilises textual structures and content which resist the Socratic demand for conceptual clarity. He writes 'Myth is not based on one thought . . . but is itself a process of thinking; it communicates its ideas of the world, but as a succession of events, deeds and afflictions. The *Ring of the Nibelungen* is a huge system of thoughts without the conceptual form of thinking' (KSA 1 p. 485), a statement which complements his remarks from the notes of 1871 on programme music, so popular in the nineteenth century: 'Imagine . . . what an undertaking it must be to make music into a poem, i.e. to illustrate a poem with music in order to help music to a conceptual language: what a perverse world! A task that comes across to me like a son wanting to sire his own father' (KSA 7: 12 [1] p. 362).

Yet while Wagner's musical praxis embodies for the young Nietzsche the rebirth of an authentically aesthetic art form, the surface similarities hide significant differences, as was the case too with Nietzsche's relation to earlier aesthetic philosophies. Wagner's commitment to Schopenhauer, the authenticity of his mid-life conversion, cannot be doubted. From the mid-1850's there is a number of letters to friends and acquaintances which testify to his enthusiasm for the philosopher's works. In December 1854 he writes to Liszt that 'I have been concerning myself with a person who has come to me in my solitude . . . like a gift from heaven. It is Arthur Schopenhauer, the greatest philosopher since Kant'⁷, and writes on Schopenhauer again to Liszt in the following year (7th June), noting that 'This act of denial of the Will is the genuine act of the saint: he reaches perfection only in the complete negation of his personal consciousness.'⁸

Wagner's commitment to Schopenhauerian metaphysics is naturally most manifest in his operas, which represent a potent symbolic expression of the metaphysics of the Will. As Tracy Strong has indicated⁹, Wagner was concerned with the problem of redemption and transcendence throughout his career, both before and after his encounter with Schopenhauer. However, Schopenhauer's work did offer Wagner a set of ideas which he found fruitful in his operatic oeuvre. From *Tristan und Isolde*, with its notions of the lovers' redemption through death and negation¹⁰ to *Parsifal*, where the eponymous hero redeems everything and everyone through his unconscious bumbling, Wagner's ideal is one of redemption through complete dissolution of self-consciousness, whether this becomes manifest

as the actual termination of individual lives, or as the complete lack of self-consciousness through sheer idiocy, or as the amnesia of Siegfried, the redemptive hero of the Ring, whose inability to recall his own past signifies the selfsame dissolution of subjectivity. The origin of such ideas is clear, for they repeat Schopenhauer's understanding of the redemptive function of asceticism and all forms of negation of the will-to-live, and it is clear, too, that as Nietzsche becomes more and more aware of the extent of his differences with Schopenhauer, so too he will distance himself from Wagner.

Nietzsche's break with Wagner is not so significant in itself, but rather more as a symptom of Nietzsche's rejection of the metaphysical and Christian structures of thinking which require redemption and transcendence. Wagner becomes the target of his two late polemics, *The Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche contra Wagner* and also of numerous unpublished notes from the late 1880's, principally because the composer is for Nietzsche merely the most prominent example of the moral malaise of modernity. Nietzsche writes in § 11 of *the Case of Wagner* that 'Victor Hugo and Richard Wagner - they signify one and the same thing, that in cultures of decline wherever the choice falls into the laps of the masses, authenticity always becomes superfluous, disadvantageous, retrogressive' (KSA 6 p. 37), thus equating the mass appeal of Wagnerian theatre with a bogus popular culture still bound to the demands of slave morality.

Regarding Wagnerian drama he writes in the first 'Nachschrift' to *The Case of Wagner* that 'Everything that has ever grown up on the soil of impoverished life, this entire false coinage of transcendence and the Beyond, has found its sublimest advocate in the art of Wagner . . . My friends, drink just the philtres of this art ! Nowhere will you find a more pleasant way of unnerving your spirit, and of forgetting your masculinity under a rose bush . . .' (ibid. p. 43).

One notes, too, that while Nietzsche rejects the morality that Wagner typifies, even now he has to acknowledge the extraordinary power Wagner's music exerts over the listener. Hence Nietzsche's repeated insistence on his differences with the composer, as if it were intended to convince him as much as his readers. In the section of *Nietzsche contra Wagner* entitled 'We Antipodeans' he writes 'The revenge on life itself - the most wilful kind of intoxication for such impoverished people ! . . . Both Wagner and Schopenhauer answer the two-fold need of these last people - they deny life, they defame it, for this reason they are my antipodeans' (ibid. p. 425).

Undoubtedly the most serious charge which Nietzsche brings to bear against Wagner, though, is that of having destroyed music. In order to further distance his own conception of the artist from Wagner, Nietzsche uses almost any word available for Wagner except that of artist. Wagner is a charlatan (a term also

reserved, strangely, for Victor Hugo), a decadent, a seducer, a womaniser, an actor, and his music is a kind of 'underhand' Christianity, but it is not 'authentic art', since 'music has lost its world-transfigurative, affirmative character - it is the music of *décadence*, and no longer the flute of Dionysus' (ibid. p. 357).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have traced the development of Nietzsche's thought after *The Birth of Tragedy*, and more specifically by examining his reactions to that work and to his debt to Wagner and Schopenhauer. There is no question that Nietzsche was merely replicating the ideas of the two earlier figures, for as I have shown in the last chapter, there is already a considerable distance between his ideas and those of his mentors. However in his later work that distance becomes explicit and the cause of Nietzsche's polemic against Wagner. More particularly, we see exemplified in Nietzsche's confrontation with Wagner his wider rejection of philosophies of transcendence and redemption, a rejection which should warn us of the complex nature of the function of tragedy in *The Birth of Tragedy*. We also see in Nietzsche's later polemic against Wagner the outlines of a theory of 'authentic' art, which is to counter the 'bogus' art of Wagner and opera in general. This distinction was already apparent in *The Birth of Tragedy*, yet what Nietzsche is admitting to in his later comments on Wagner is in effect the ease with which one becomes fooled by Wagner, and the ease with which metaphysics insinuates itself into the work of art. Hence Nietzsche's hope for cultural renewal through art is not imagined as an easy task - rather as a struggle, and this parallels the difficulty of the actual cognitive demands he is making of the post-metaphysical individual.

If Nietzsche sees tragic consolation and wisdom as offering everything but some moment of redemptive transcendence, how are we to understand Nietzsche's tragic sublime? Above all, how are we to understand the nature of Dionysian 'Rausch', or intoxication, if it is not to be equated with the simple redemption through self-dissolution of the subject that occurs in Schopenhauer or Wagner? How does the notion of intoxication, or rapture, relate to this undeclared philosophy of immanence which Nietzsche is setting up in opposition to metaphysics?

To provide answers to these questions it is necessary to examine the role of time in Nietzsche's philosophy, and more specifically to examine the temporality of immanence in contrast to that of metaphysics and transcendence. I have introduced the theme briefly in this chapter, and it is now time to explore it further.

Notes;

¹ See Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* Vol. I § 52 & Vol. II § 39, and E.T.A. Hoffmann's various writings on music such as his 1810 review of Beethoven's 5th symphony or the essay 'Old and New Church Music', both published in Hoffmann, *Schriften zur Musik* hrsg. F. Schnapp (Munich: Winkler Verlag 1963). Nietzsche's account of the birth of the opera in Renaissance Florence (in § 19 of *The Birth of Tragedy*), and the criticisms he makes of opera's tendency to subordinate the music to the words bears a strong resemblance to Hoffmann's own critique of opera (in particular of the work of Monteverdi). For a detailed general account of the history of the relation of words to music in eighteenth and nineteenth century thought see Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. R. Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

² Josef Simon, 'Grammatik und Wahrheit' p. 190.

³ Aristotle, *Physics Books III & IV*, trans. and ed. Edward Hussey, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) 217^b 33-4.

⁴ See, for example, Hussey's commentary which notes that 'now we may ask why anyone should accept the special sense of 'be' as an indication of reality' (p. 139). For a more extensive analysis of this flaw in Aristotle's reasoning see Jacques Derrida's 'Ousia and Grammè. Note on a note from *Being and Time*' in *Margins of Philosophy*. Derrida writes that 'in order to states the nothingness of time, one already has had to appeal to time, to a precomprehension of time, and, within discourse, to the self-evidence and functioning of the verb's tenses . . . Being has been determined temporally as being-present in order to determine time as nonpresent and nonbeing' (pp. 50-1). It is a criticism which repeats Nietzsche's own insight that 'From the values attributed to a being [dem Seienden] there proceeds the condemnation of and dissatisfaction with that which is becoming [im Werdenden], after such a world of Being [des Seins] had been invented' (KSA 12: 7 [54] p. 313).

⁵ On account of Hegel's implication in the redemptive thinking of metaphysics one would have to dispute Houlgate's view that Hegel's philosophy constitutes a more substantial critique of metaphysics than does the thought of Nietzsche. See Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁶ Tracy Strong, 'Nietzsche's Political Aesthetics' in Tracy Strong & Michael Allen Gillespie (eds.), *Nietzsche's New Seas. Explorations in Philosophy, Aesthetics and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 153 - 174.

⁷ Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Briefe*, hrsg. G. Strobel & W. Wolff (Leipzig: V.E.B. Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1979), Vol. 6 no. 184.

⁸ Ibid., Volume 7 no. 71. See too letter no. 46 to Jakob Sulzer, dated 10th - 12th May 1855.

⁹ Tracy Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), p. 228 ff.

¹⁰ For a brief account of *Tristan und Isolde* see the chapter devoted to it in Carl Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagner's Music Dramas*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Art and Eternal Recurrence

It is well known that one of the key terms Nietzsche employs to counter the metaphysical petrification of 'life' is that of 'Becoming'. It functions as a counterweight to the fetish of Being, with its concomitant denial of the temporal. Yet it is not a move without its own attendant dangers. Metaphysical resistance to temporality is also manifest in the connotations of the word 'become'. As we saw in the example of Hegel in the last chapter, 'Becoming' is still closely bound to a teleological understanding of the world, with the implicit goal of a moment of final stasis.

In both his published and unpublished work Nietzsche places great emphasis on the importance of abandoning any teleological principles, even if, as in Kant, they are recognised as merely regulative ideas facilitating the study of the nature.¹ For example he criticises the notion that during evolution the eye somehow developed in order to facilitate vision, suggesting instead that vision 'rather occurred once pure chance had assembled the apparatus' (KSA 3 p. 115), and attacks too the habit of 'interpreting history to the honour of divine reason, as a constant indicator of a moral world-order and a moral ultimate purpose' (ibid. p. 600).

It is on the basis of this specific critique of the metaphysical refusal of temporality that we must understand Nietzsche's writing concerning time, and more particularly his doctrine of Eternal Recurrence. Eternal Recurrence is notorious as the most difficult aspect of Nietzsche's œuvre, and one cannot hope to give an exhaustive account of its full range of meanings and uses within the space of a single chapter. Hence my treatment of the Eternal Recurrence will of necessity be highly selective, giving way to book-length studies on the subject for a more complete understanding of the 'thought of thoughts'.² Undoubtedly a large part of the problem in comprehending the 'doctrine' of Eternal Recurrence stems from Nietzsche's refusal to present it in a unified and coherent manner. Adopting a strategy of resistance to conceptualisation, Nietzsche presents the doctrine as so many speculative thoughts and unanswered questions. When Nietzsche first presents the thought in published form, as the penultimate aphorism of the fourth book of *The Gay Science* (no. 341), it is communicated in the following form: 'What if a demon crept up on you in your lonely solitude during the day or at night and said to you: "You will have to live this life, which you are now living and have lived, once more and countless times again . . ." ' (KSA 3 p. 570). Elsewhere, and especially in the *Nachlaß* it is presented as a cosmological theory, with

scientific 'proofs'. There is the additional problem that Nietzsche is keen to express how inarticulable is the 'thought of thoughts'. In one a note from the period of the composition of *The Gay Science* he introduces the idea that everything might recur, adding: 'Beginning of August 1881 in Sils-Maria, 6,000 feet above sea level and much higher above all human things' (KSA 9: 11 [141] p. 494). In the section on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo* he refers to this note when he describe the genesis of the thought. He writes: 'The founding conception of this work [i.e. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*], the thought of Eternal Return, this highest formula of affirmation that can ever be attained, belongs to August 1881: it is cast onto a sheet with the subtitle: "6,000 feet beyond humanity and time"' (KSA 6 p. 335).

How should it be interpreted? Is the doctrine a scientific theory (fully furnished with scientific proofs in the notes of the later 1880's), or a speculative cosmology, or a moral imperative? In a sense it is all and none at the same time. As I shall show, Nietzsche presents the doctrine in certain ways as part of his wider strategy of resistance to the philosophy of transcendence. Hence I shall dispute Heidegger's reading³, which would place the doctrine at the core of Nietzsche's thought, more fundamental even than his notion of will to power.

If we turn first to the scientific version of Nietzsche's doctrine, we encounter a certain embarrassment. Nietzsche's argument runs thus: 'If the world may be thought of as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centres of force . . . it follows that in the great dice game of existence, it must pass through a calculable number of combinations. In infinite time every possible combination would at some time or other be reached; more, it would have been reached an infinite number times. And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series, a circular movement of absolutely identical series is thus demonstrated: the world as a circular movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game in infinitum' (KSA 13: 14 [188] p. 376). We feel embarrassed not only because the argument is not particularly convincing (or rather about as convincing as Zeno's paradox of the arrow), but also because the manner of argumentation and the premisses of the argument run counter to the nature of his work in 1888, with its ever increasing hostility to the sciences and scientific thinking.

Fortunately we are spared the embarrassment since David Wood has reminded us⁴ that we need not interpret Nietzsche as actually being persuaded by his own argument. Instead, Wood maintains, Nietzsche is employing the language of contemporary sciences merely to demonstrate that his theory is as valid *in scientific terms* as the contemporary conception of time as a linear process. Nietzsche could be seen not as trying to prove the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence with a 'scientific'

proof, but rather as trying to demonstrate, to those for whom mechanistic science *does* constitute the valid model of understanding, that a notion of cyclical time is no less valid than one of linear time. Nietzsche's own understanding is of course that the doctrine requires a level of comprehension far above that of everyday human thinking, yet given that this is not possible for all, he is obliged to present it in different terms.

The same can be said for his cosmological 'proof' of cyclical time, which as Wood observes mimics the language of Aristotelian thinking. A fragment from 1885 addresses the understanding of time as linear in a manner analogous to the scientific 'proof', in other words by countering the teleological assumptions of Aristotelianism on its own terms: 'If the world had a goal, it must have been reached. If there were an unintended final state for it, this too must have been reached. If it were at all capable of tarrying, of becoming fixed, of "Being", if, amongst all its Becoming, it were capable just for one instant of "Being", then all Becoming would long since have come to an end, similarly with all thinking, with all "spirit". The fact of "spirit" as a Becoming proves that the world has no goal, no final state and is incapable of Being' (KSA 11: 36 [15] p. 556).

Again Nietzsche is not trying to prove the veracity of his doctrine, rather he is bringing under scrutiny the implications of the Aristotelian assumption of linear time, leading towards a moment of apocalypse and subsequent redemption. He is cashing out in these terms what it would mean to maintain both a recognition of the dynamics of world history and belief in a telos which would amount to a transcendence above and beyond the world of Becoming. Implicit in this polemic is also an assault on Hegelian dialectics. For, Nietzsche is arguing, if spirit, or Geist, is defined as activity, and in Hegelian thinking its activity constitutes the unfolding of world history, the question as to why it should suddenly cease upon assumption to Absolute Knowledge remains unanswered. The fact that the telos of Hegelian Geist is *stasis*, final inactivity, calls us to re-examine the view of spirit as essential activity.

On this view then, we need not view the more scientific or cosmological aspects of Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence as troublesome aberrations. Rather, they are part of a polemic informed by an *ad hominem* approach to its targets, and it is this *ad hominem* (or *feminam* !) approach which most graphically illustrates Nietzsche's treatment of metaphysics as a textual practice, where the manner to undermine such practices is not to critique them in the name of some other, higher truth, but rather to assimilate oneself to the peculiarities of their discourse in order to dismantle them from within.

In his earlier work, most especially in the second of the *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche already expresses a concern with the problem of time, and particu-

larly with the authentic appropriation of time and history. He opens 'On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life' with a parable, drawing out the fundamental distinction between animal and human existence: 'Look at the herd that grazes by you: it does not know what yesterday, what today is, it jumps around, eats, rests, digests, jumps around again, and so on from morning to night, from day to day, closely tied to its pleasure and displeasure . . .' (KSA 1 p. 248). Faced with this spectacle, the human asks the animal why it does not tell him of its happiness, and consequently 'The animal wishes to answer him and say "that's because I always forget what I was going to say" - but then it forgot even this answer and so remained silent . . .' (ibid.).

In contrast, human Being is weighed down with memory of the past, its essential historicity being defined as a fundamental determinant of its character. As Nietzsche says, 'He [i.e. the human] is surprised by his own inability to learn how to forget, and the fact that he constantly hangs on to the past: no matter how far and fast he might run, the chain runs with him' (ibid.). Continuing further Nietzsche writes 'In contrast the human stands up to the great and ever greater burden of the past: this presses down on him or makes him bend over, it hinders his path like a dark and invisible weight . . .' (ibid. p. 249).

Yet while memory is a primal determinant of the human condition, and Nietzsche even offers elementary psychology on the basis of his understanding of the function of memory, humans are nevertheless caught in a terrible dilemma. For the precondition to any thought or deed is the ability to forget, and as we have seen it is this forgetting which lies at the root of metaphysics. Nietzsche says, 'Imagine the most extreme example, a human who did not have any ability to forget, who would be condemned to seeing Becoming everywhere: such a person no longer believes in his own being, no longer believes in himself, sees everything flowing apart as animated points and loses himself in this stream of Becoming: like the true pupil of Heraclitus he will no longer dare to lift his finger' (ibid. p. 250).

Formulating an embryonic perspectivism, Nietzsche insists on the necessity of a temporal horizon, in order to bring this overwhelming flux of time and history temporarily to a stand-still, writing that 'every living thing can only be healthy, strong and fruitful within a certain horizon: if it is incapable of drawing a horizon about itself . . . it will succumb, weakly or overhastily to a timely decay' (ibid. p. 251), an observation which echoes his criticism in *The Birth of Tragedy* of Modernity's inability of think of itself except in purely historical terms.

Following this account, human existence seems to comprise a delicate balancing act between memory and amnesia, temporality and atemporality, Being and Becoming. Nietzsche's concern is to establish a model of authentic remembrance which remains unburdened by time past, yet which does not seek

merely to escape temporality, choosing oblivion and supreme self-dissolution. Already, in this awareness of the intricate dialectic of time and the timeless, Nietzsche is distancing himself from the Schopenhauerian, Wagnerian and ultimately Christian model of historical being. Where these interpretations of history centre around the aspiration to simply forget the burden of human historicity, Nietzsche aims at the establishment of a structure which will acknowledge the immanence of humanity to time, and it is with this that we are now moving towards the temporal aspect of his 'immanentism'.

On the basis of this introductory sketch alone it will have become apparent why Nietzsche has so many reservations about what he terms 'Critical history'. For here the critical historian uses his art 'once again in the service of life. He must have and occasionally employ the capacity to break apart and dissolve the past, in order to be able to live: he achieves this by putting it on trial, painfully cross-examining it, and finally condemning it' (ibid. p. 269). Yet critical history implies Nihilism, although Nietzsche does not use the term at this stage in his career, merely remarking instead that in its attempt to fight against the burden of the past, in its desire to condemn the past, critical history is then led to conclude that '“Everything which comes to be deserves to wither away. Thus it would better if nothing ever came into being”' (ibid.). Moreover, despite this need for redemption from the past, human thinking is also motivated by the need for the 'occasional annihilation of this forgetfulness' (ibid.).

Hence the sense of piety towards the past, embodied in the so-called 'Antiquarian history', which lovingly preserves everything which belongs to the past, an attitude which Nietzsche sees repeated in the Hegelian dialectic. For, as Nietzsche notes, "These historical people believe that the meaning of existence will come ever more to light through the run of history, they therefore just look backwards, to understand the present by examining the process up until now . . .'" (ibid. p. 255). It is a criticism which Nietzsche will continue to make in his later thinking, culminating perhaps in the section 'On redemption' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* where Nietzsche writes 'now cloud upon cloud rolled over the spirit, until eventually madness preached "Everything passes away, therefore everything is worth passing away"' (KSA 4 p. 180). Hence, by locating the meaning of Geist in historical activity, Hegel is firstly valuing change for its own sake, and also affirming everything as a necessary stage on Geist's journey towards self-completion in a paradoxical affirmation and negation of historicity.

The key to these complex problems Nietzsche sees in 'Monumental' history, which exercises a selective appropriation of the past, not in order merely to retain it for antiquarian interest, but in order to use those past moments for the present, hence his use of the word 'Historie' in place of the more academic term

'Geschichte' in order to offer inspiration for the future. And it is this repetition of certain past moments and events which provide a temporary arena within which action can take place, without being burdened by the full weight of the past, and without simply trying to cast history into the oblivion of forgetfulness.

To understand this further, we must accept, first, that Nietzsche's conception of history is essentially prosopographic. History is the history of great persons and deeds, or at least for Nietzsche's monumental history these are the only events in the past that actually count in terms of its authentic appropriation. As Nietzsche notes, 'History belongs above all to the active and the mighty one, who leads a great struggle, who requires models, teachers, consolers and cannot find them in the present' (ibid. p. 258), and in keeping with Nietzsche's anti-egalitarian politics, it is to the great of today that monumental history is important.

The choice of the word monumental is by no means accidental, suggesting the retrieving of something permanent from the past, something which will endure into the future. Nietzsche makes this all the more explicit when he expounds the aims and principles of the monumental historian: 'whatever was once able to stretch out the concept "human" and replenish it more finely, that must be ready to hand for eternity, in order to facilitate this for eternity. That the great moments in the struggle of individuals form a chain, that in them is constituted a range of mountains through millenia, that for me the most elevated aspect of such a moment long past remain alive, bright and great - that is the fundamental thought in the belief in humanity which expresses itself in the demand for monumental history' (ibid. p. 259).

Nietzsche's monumental history seems to be attempting to overcome the paradox which besets the historicity of human being. On the one hand human being is incapable of forgetting the past through the curse of memory, i.e. forgetting is an active process which must be forced through, rather than a mere loss of that which has imprinted itself on the mind. On the other it is compelled towards escaping from temporality to initiate action in order to avoid paralysis when caught in the midst of the stream of time. It is an early version of the contrast later made forcefully by Nietzsche between the world as eternally self-consuming, self-constituting on the one hand, and the human need to regard it as stable, to posit presence, permanence, in short Being, an activity performed by interpretative will to power. As Nietzsche says in a note from 1886 / 7, 'To stamp on Becoming the character of Being - that is the highest will to power' (KSA 12: 7 [54] p. 312).

Nietzsche's wish to exercise a selective appropriation of the past in 'On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life' in order to form an authentic horizon for human interpretation and agency within the flux of time is encapsulated in the letter from Goethe to Schiller he quotes in the introduction, that 'In any case I

find everything detestable which merely instructs, without increasing my activity, or at least animating it' (ibid. p. 245). Encouraging an ethic of mimesis, i.e. the mimesis of past great events and their continued execution, Nietzsche is moving away from a purely linear view of history and time and towards a cyclical understanding. Great action is facilitated by the repetition of selected past events, a repetition which establishes a momentary permanence, freeing the agent from historical paralysis.⁵ In contrast, however, Modernity seems unable to liberate itself from its subjection to time past. Nietzsche writes 'you no longer succeed in keeping hold of the sublime . . . for art flies away whenever you stretch the canopy of history over your deeds' (ibid. p. 280), a sentence which reinforces the crucial role of time in Nietzsche's understanding of the aesthetic, pitting art against Modernity on the basis of the temporal.⁶

From this account of we see that in many ways the thought of Eternal Recurrence is anticipated in Nietzsche's asseverations on the function of history and the past in informing human agency. However, one must be wary of trying to eliminate the differences between Nietzsche's earlier thinking and his later work, and we must now press on to examine the manner in which he explores the possible meanings of Eternal Recurrence.

I shall begin with the two most accessible 'communications' of Nietzsche's 'thought of thoughts', namely aphorism no. 341 in *The Gay Science* and no. 56 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. The form of the earlier aphorism is, as I have said previously, that of a question. Nietzsche asks 'how would it be if . . .' In response to the question he asks how one might one respond. 'Would you not cast yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon that spoke in this manner? Or have you ever experienced a monstrous moment when you would answer him "you are a god, and I have never heard anything more divine!" If that thought gained power over you, it would change you as you are, and perhaps crush you; the question with everything and anything "do you want this once more, and then countless times again?" would lie in your hands like the greatest of burdens' (KSA 3 p. 570).

Nietzsche is here not putting forward a statement concerning the nature of cosmological time. Unlike Schopenhauer's distinction between objective, cyclical time and subjective linear time, Nietzsche's thought of Eternal Recurrence is not attempting to assert an objective 'truth' about time, indeed would not be able to. Rather, his interest is in how human behaviour would be affected if one accepted the thought of Return. Does one resign oneself to this 'vicious circle' of time, cursing the very demon that suggested the idea, or does one fully affirm and embrace the idea, the response Nietzsche terms *amor fati*? This is the crucial aspect of the thought of Eternal Return, inasmuch as it has bearing upon the thought of re-

demption and transcendence, and it is this aspect which Nietzsche discusses more explicitly in the aphorism from *Beyond Good and Evil*. For here, Nietzsche notes that whoever attempts to fully explore pessimism in all its world-denying manifestations will also be open to 'the ideal of the most high-spirited, animated and world-affirming human, who has not only come to terms with what was and is, and learned to endure it, but also desires to have it again, just as it was and is, for eternity, crying out insatiably "da capo" ' (KSA 5 p. 75). In this aphorism and in the earlier one from *The Gay Science* Nietzsche is concerned with communicating an idea of time which would undermine the structure of thinking that demands redemption from time.

Eternal Return would thus also form part of the strategy to develop a philosophy of immanence, a philosophy which would be constituted by a configuration of thoughts opposed to those such as 'truth', 'redemption', 'teleology' and so forth which make up the philosophical, religious and moral complex generated by metaphysics. The integral role Eternal Recurrence plays in Nietzsche's wider strategy of immanence can be seen clearly in the unpublished note from the same time as *The Gay Science* quoted from earlier. For in this note Nietzsche describes the assimilation of the idea in strictly physiological terms, as 'incorporation' [Einverleibung], thus reinforcing the notion of the immanent both temporally and spatially.

Following this reading it becomes clear that Heidegger's interpretation of Eternal Recurrence, for all its subtlety, to a certain extent misses the mark. On two counts, Heidegger's view that Eternal Recurrence represents Nietzsche fundamental metaphysical position as regards the question of beings and their constitution, a metaphysical proposition which complements and supplements the notion of will to power, can be shown to be misplaced. First, given Nietzsche's extensive criticisms of the delusions of logic, metaphysics and science, it is difficult to imagine him claiming Eternal Recurrence to be the objective 'how' of things. In this respect alone, the Heideggerian interpretation is now questionable because of Heidegger's disconcerting tendency to see certain ideas as constituting Nietzsche's 'fundamental metaphysical position'.

While the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence is undoubtedly important to Nietzsche, one must be careful of seeing it as an ontological theory. Heidegger's concern with temporality is with its function in determining Dasein's understanding of Being, concluding in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* that 'if temporality makes possible the Dasein in its ontological constitution, then temporality must also be the condition of the possibility of the understanding of being and hence of the projection of being upon time.'⁷ Naturally, the critical reader would feel uneasy at

seeing that most metaphysical of words, 'Being', imposed upon Nietzsche's doctrine of Eternal Recurrence.

Second, even if one were instead to see Nietzsche merely as giving the idea the same status as his claim that reality is a chaos, i.e. admitted it to be a 'mere' interpretation, and this is the interpretation Joan Stambaugh offers of his doctrine too, this would still misconstrue the tenor of Nietzsche's speculations. For in the manner he presents the idea, it is apparent that Nietzsche is not necessarily interested in offering an interpretation of time, i.e. one that would be more accurate than the governing Aristotelian notion. Once again, he is concerned with the ethical and cultural implications of seeing time in a new light, regardless of its 'truthfulness' or not. He is suggesting that by viewing time cyclically, one might conceive of human agency and social activity differently so as to avoid the onset of reactive or passive Nihilism to which the thought of and desire for transcendence will give rise.

If we turn to a more recent book, namely Mark Warren's *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, we find Eternal Recurrence no longer interpreted as an ontological doctrine, but instead as a statement about the objective truth of human behaviour. Warren is, of course, correct to see the question of selfhood and recurrence as inextricably linked, and rightly criticises Stambaugh for producing a polarity between 'historicity' and 'subjectivity'. However, Warren has simply transferred the Heideggerian interpretation from the sphere of Being to that of Self. Eternal Recurrence is now a theory concerning the nature of human historical existence and as such recalls Freud's use of the notion in his speculations on the function of repetition in human psychology.

The mimetic theory of human behaviour, the understanding of language as a system of *iterable* signs, and the acceptance of the fact that experiences are structured by a common horizon so as to give them a quality of sameness, all these considerations naturally draw us towards the idea of seeing Eternal Recurrence as a descriptive analysis of the temporality of human being. Yet such an interpretation fails to take into account the fact that Nietzsche's interest is in how 'incorporation' of the idea of Eternal Recurrence would *change* and *alter* human practices, not in whether it constitutes an adequate description. The thought is described as a burden [Schwergewicht] which threatens to crush [zermalmern] those to whom it is communicated. If the doctrine is intended merely in the manner Warren interprets it, one runs into difficulties trying to comprehend Nietzsche's use of such language in referring to it. Why should a mere *description* of the mimetic aspects of human activity be seen as a crushing burden, and moreover what room does this leave for the dramatic term *amor fati*? To understand this still further we must turn to Nietzsche's most difficult presentation of the doctrine, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Turning to the section in book II of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* entitled 'On Redemption' we find further evidence that the Eternal Recurrence is not meant as a description of either cosmological time or subjective temporality. For in this passage Nietzsche quite explicitly identifies the impossibility of recuperating the past, the recognition that the past cannot be changed or restored to the present, as one of the principle causes for the human rage against time. All volitional acts have to accept the past as the absolute other of the present, as absolutely irrecoverable. He notes that ' "It was": this is the name of the Will's gnashing of teeth and most solitary affliction. Important towards what has been done - it is a malevolent spectator of everything past' (KSA 4 p. 180), and adds further on, 'The fact that time does not flow backwards is the cause of its anger: "Whatever was" - this is the name of the stone that it cannot budge' (ibid.). And it is this very fact which is the origin of the Will's desire for revenge against the past, its condemnation of the object beyond its power, and consequently, because of the historicity of human Being, its condemnation of life itself.

Earlier in the same section we find Zarathustra coming into contact with the 'inverse cripples' of Modernity, those representatives of modern theoretical culture who suffer from hypertrophy of one particular organ, the most striking example being the strange creatures consisting of an ear on a stalk. The significance of this episode is all too clear: their hypertrophic mutation symbolises the incomplete and one-sided understanding of modern humanity, with its rigid and narrow interpretative perspective on the world. As Zarathustra says, 'I am wandering amongst humans as if amongst the fragments and limbs of humans' (ibid. p. 178), and it is this notion of fragmentariness which Nietzsche then returns to when describing the posture of the volitional agent toward time past: 'All "it was" is a fragment, a puzzle, a fearful chance event - until the creative will says to it: "but that is how I wanted it ! that is how I shall want it !" ' (ibid. p. 181). The 'it was' remains a fragment inasmuch as even the affirmation of the past must needs be opened up to the temporal horizons of present and future.

The obsession of theoretical culture with the 'it was', paralleling its more general fragmentary and incomplete interpretative attitude towards the world, lies at the root of that culture's obsessive search for redemption from time and its concomitant yearning to transcend mundanity. The linear understanding of time displays an inability to understand the intertwining of past present and future, and consequently in its feeling of frustration at the absolute heterogeneity of the present and the past. Because its graphic model of time necessarily portrays the past as irrecoverable, it develops the various kinds of 'madness' [Wahnsinn] which Nietzsche describes in this section. It can be the nostalgia for everything past, which results in the indiscriminate preservation of all history, an attitude which as I have

suggested earlier, is given philosophical form in Hegel's dialectic of the history of Geist. Alternatively it can lead to the desire to escape from time altogether, the chief example being Christian ideas of redemption, but also manifest in the Hegelian goal of Absolute Knowledge, indeed in all forms of teleological thinking.

If this is the case, what is Nietzsche offering in its place, and what function does 'authentic' art (that is in contrast to the metaphysical 'non-art' of Richard Wagner) have in this process? The answer to the first question comes in the section of *Zarathustra* called 'Of the vision and the riddle'. The answer to the second question will have to be temporarily postponed. Coming back to Zarathustra, as is well known, the eponymous hero approaches the gate called 'Moment', a gate lying at the point of convergence of the two paths of eternal past and eternal future.

How should this placing of the gate between these two paths, those of the eternally past and the eternally futural, be understood? Obviously Nietzsche is here consciously splitting away from the Aristotelian view of time where the past is that which is no longer and the future is not yet, by virtue of his presenting all three temporal aspects, past, present and future as simultaneities converging on the one point. In so doing he is upsetting the scheme which has sustained them as different aspects of time, on the lines drawn in Aristotle's *Physics*, a scheme we have seen dependant on the equation of being with being present (and hence also not passing away). But Nietzsche is not aspiring to transform how we think being, as if he were anticipating Heidegger, for he has already argued that the privileged locus accorded to being is the problem, not merely something requiring clarification. Rather, he is trying to think through the consequences for thinking about time if we deprive being of its privilege. For if we abandon being in the name of becoming, life or even semiotics, we will have to abandon, too, the easy categorisation of the temporal into its three well-known aspects, a categorisation maintained on the basis of that which is now in question.

Nietzsche writes 'Are not all things so tightly knotted together that this moment carries all things in its wake? - - Thus itself in addition?' (KSA 4 p. 200). With this question we can read him as claiming that all moments of time bear the trace or the imprint of all others, in a scheme which stresses the intertwining of past, present and future. It is a manner of thinking time which forbids any unproblematic logical and artificial separation of time into 'aspects'. This is surely what Nietzsche is exhorting us to imagine, temporality where each moment of the present belongs to the past and to the future, robbing it of any particular privilege in epistemological and ontological terms. In a move so reminiscent of Derrida's thematics of the trace and *différance* (though not assimilable to them), Nietzsche is pulling us away from our attachment to an inert, unchanging being present, against which all other aspects of temporality are judged negatively.

How does this recasting of the problem of time represent any kind of solution? In a sense it solves it by virtue of the fact that time is no longer a problem *as such*. Stripping the present of its privilege nullifies the sense of the past as something that is no longer, that is lost, something which must either be yearned for by the melancholic delusions of Antiquarian history or denigrated by the metaphysical demand for sempiternity.⁸ Advancing what is initially not a particularly original claim, namely that time should not be seen as a series of discrete points, radically heterogeneous, receding into the distance as soon as they appear on the horizon, Nietzsche is pushing an idea through as far as he can take it, linking Eternal Recurrence to his critique of Being.

Significantly, his overturning of the power of being-present to determine the value of the other aspects of temporal existence simultaneously fortifies his project of immanentism. For if the present is no longer given the function of determining the value and character of past and future, the entire superstructure of metaphysics for which it serves as a foundation, will similarly fall to pieces.

Yet if this is what Nietzsche is aiming at, how does this come to resolve the earlier problem we noted, namely that of reconciling the historicity of human being with the need for an atemporal interpretative horizon? One can begin by noting that Nietzsche's 'deconstruction' of the three aspects of temporality does not necessarily place one into a dimensionless flux of pure Becoming. What brings about this deconstruction (if it may be described in this way) also unites the three moments of time, namely repetition, iteration (and here we see how Eternal Recurrence constitutes a temporalisation of Nietzsche's early theory of language) - and it is this permanent inscription of the past in the present which in addition to undermining the present's function in metaphysics, introduces a universality of form into all temporal moments, without granting any special status to any particular aspect of time. Hence we can see the dual function of the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence, displacing the 'metaphysics of the present' while simultaneously introducing that necessary horizon of ahistoricity *within* the flux of history, or to put it in the words of Heidegger, enacting a 'permanentising of Becoming'.

Yet this inscription of past in the present does not compel us to assume a weary fatalism, for what is being advanced is merely a formal structure, rather than any particular content. If we maintain the selectivity thesis of Klossowski, we can see Eternal Recurrence as presenting the totality of past inscriptions as a set of potentialities. This can become a crushing burden if we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the sheer range of potentialities, becoming, like Achilles in 'Homer's Competition' I discussed in Chapter two, literally paralysed by the infinity of choices. Alternatively it can be an opportunity to exercise a certain selectivity, in choosing which marks we should allow to inscribe themselves on the

future, which itself will eventually be our own past. We can choose which patterns should become recurrent, and change who we are, as individuals, and once again Klossowski sees the strong internal connection between Eternal Recurrence and identity.

The parallel with the Heideggerian model is all too clear, for Heidegger's own analysis of authenticity is concerned with the temporal ekstases of Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Yet despite the surface similarities between the two thinkers, the unity of Eternal Recurrence should not be confused with the unified horizon of the three ekstases of Heideggerian temporality⁹. Heidegger's initial treatment of the temporal structure of care stresses the equi-primordial role of past, present and future, noting that 'We therefore call the phenomena of the future, the character of having been, and the Present, the *ekstases* of temporality [Zeitlichkeit]. Temporality is not, prior to this, an entity which first emerges from *itself* ; its essence is a process of temporalising in the unity of the ekstases.'¹⁰ In this he would be seen rightly as working against the common-sense 'inauthentic' view of time as an endless linear succession of nows, 'without beginning and without end'.

However Heidegger then reverts to the former model when he asserts that all three ekstases are determined by the future, an understanding of time no doubt governed by the importance of projection, intentionality and 'anticipatory resoluteness' in the argument of *Being and Time* . Heidegger writes, for example, that 'we have always mentioned the future first . . . to indicate that the future has a priority in the ekstasical unity of primordial and authentic temporality' (*Being and Time* p. 378), adding in a following section that 'If the term "understanding" is taken in a way which is primordially existential, it means *to be projecting towards a potentiality-for-Being for the sake of which any Dasein exists* ' (ibid. p. 385). In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* Heidegger continues this theme still further, articulating it ever more explicitly and thoroughly, until he actually equates understanding and futurity when he notes that 'Understanding is primarily futural, for it comes towards itself from its chosen possibility of itself. In coming-towards-itself the Dasein has also already taken itself over as the being that it in each case already has been' (*Basic Problems* p. 287). With the arc of intentionality governing Dasein's relation to the world and the temporal foundations of its Being-in-the-world, both past and present gain their meaning from anticipation of future possibilities of being, what Heidegger terms 'repetitive self-precedence'. In other words, Dasein is always going out beyond itself, projecting itself onto its own can-be, whence it returns to exercise an authentic gathering up of its own present and past.

The significance of this aspect of Heidegger's understanding of time lies in the fact that his concern with projection inevitably leads him back to the idea of transcendence, a key term in his existential analysis of Dasein.¹¹ For

'Transcendence', as Heidegger notes, denotes a 'stepping over', and as such it is not objects that can be 'transcendent' but only 'subjects', which, grounded in the temporal structure of Dasein can step beyond themselves, indeed of necessity must, since it is this that facilitates comportment toward the world. Heidegger continues to explicitly reject any notion of immanence, stating that 'Transcendence is even the pre-supposition for Dasein's having the character of a self. The selfhood of Dasein is founded on its transcendence, and Dasein is not first an ego-self which then oversteps something or other' (ibid. p. 300), an understanding which leads Heidegger to criticise Leibniz' monadological account of mental substances.

The importance of this excursus on Heidegger is to prise apart the two philosophers' thoughts on time when they seem so similar. For the significant difference lies in Nietzsche's refusal to grant special status to any of the three aspects of temporality. On a superficial level, the individual in Nietzsche, too, steps out beyond itself in the mere present, yet it steps out toward its own *past*, fulfilling the possibility of a selective repetition and re-appropriation of its own past for the future. The individual is caught within the circle of his or her own history, with no possibility of stepping outside itself toward an absolute temporal other. It is this difference, too, with respect to the past, which makes Heidegger so much closer to Kant and metaphysics than Nietzsche. For Heidegger the primordial importance of projection entails that the ultimate act of Dasein's self-transcendence is its relation to death and annihilation. As such death constitutes a given with the same significance we have seen it have for Kant and Schiller's theories of the sublime, with the experience of the sublime providing the sternest test of one's relation to one's own mortality. Sharing no such morbid interest in death, Nietzsche is concerned with articulating an ethic that does not gain its primary meaning from the fact of human mortality. An ethic that therefore undercuts the claims of all moral and cultural practices devoted to a transcending of the present and the past, and of life itself.

Art

If we turn to the question of art and its relation to the problem of time, we encounter a complex set of arguments which link both Nietzsche's early writing and his later thought. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche draws much of his account of beauty from Schopenhauer, where the beautiful is characterised as the permanent, hence the exclamation of the Apollinian dreamer, 'It is a dream, I want to *continue* [my *Italics*] dreaming.' Built into the structure of the beautiful is the will to permanence, and it exemplifies that deepest human drive for stability and ahistoricity, to which goal metaphysical will to power devotes all its interpretative energies. As Zarathustra sings, in the famous poem towards the end of the fourth

book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 'Pain speaks: Pass into decline ! / Yet all desire wants eternity - / - wants deep, deep eternity !' (KSA 4 p. 404).

Yet the significance of the beautiful, and especially the work of art, is not to be derived solely from its tendency to produce permanence within the temporal flow of life or Becoming. This, in its most general form, would be common to art and to all human interpretative activity in general. Additionally, this will to form, this will to permanence at all time must not be confused with the task of antiquarian history, which in its desperate attempt to transcend time and history, seeks to literally bring time to a halt by the unselective preservation of everything past. The significance of art does not lie in this indiscriminate conservation of everything past. Rather, as will to power, as Becoming, in a manner analogous to Monumental History and Eternal Recurrence, it too represents a *selective* production of permanence, engendered by the rapture of the aesthetic state. Heidegger recognises this too when he entitles one of his chapters on Nietzsche 'Rapture as Form-engendering Force', and it is an understanding of Nietzsche's aesthetics, already present in an embryonic state in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which accounts for his later turn to what Adrian del Caro terms 'Dionysian Classicism'.¹²

Turning to *Twilight of the Idols*, for example, we find a number of crucial aphorisms, most notably in the section entitled 'Skirmishes of an Untimely One' which make this selective affirmation all the more explicit. In the eighth aphorism Nietzsche writes that 'The essential thing about rapture is the feeling of increased power and plenitude. From these powers one bestows upon things, one compels them to take from us, one violates them - this process is called Idealising . . . A sweeping emphasis on the main features, so that the others disappear beyond them' (KSA 6 p. 116). In the following aphorism Nietzsche begins: 'In this state [i.e. the state of rapture or intoxication] one enriches everything out of one's own plenitude: one sees what one wants to see, one sees it swollen, pressed, strong, overladen with power' (ibid. pp. 116-7).

Art, for Nietzsche, affirms not through its symbolic representation of transcendence, or through the transcendent redemption of the aesthetic state. Rather it transfigures through the production of the monumental. In the same way that Nietzsche imagines the *thought* of Eternal Recurrence capable of giving birth to an ethic of immanentism, so the selective recurrence and repetition of the strong, the great, serves to give birth to an aesthetic affirmative redemption, or better, transfiguration of the world. That horizon of ahistoricity required for human agency is brought about in art through its selective permanentising of a temporal world. In his notes from 1888 Nietzsche writes that 'artists are not to see anything as it is, but more fully, but more simply, but more strongly: for this they must have a manner of eternal youth and spring, a type of permanent rapture in their body' (KSA 13: 14

[117] p. 295). Avoiding the Christian and metaphysical urge to transcend the temporality of this world, either by preserving everything or negating everything, art reinforces human immanence in the world. Selectively preserving the past and presenting it as a challenge for future action and understanding, art transfigures the world of immanence, a transfiguration which, Nietzsche hopes, will help move human thinking away from its pressing desire for the beyond, both temporally and spatially.

Hence we can see how in Nietzsche's writing art and the beautiful, as will to power, thematise the temporality of will to power, through the explicit production of a permanent presence which nevertheless demands to be taken on its own terms, i.e. without reference to some external criteria of judgement. Nietzsche is here attempting to steer a course between a Formalist understanding of art and the moralising understanding of art against which Formalist aesthetics rebels. True, the work of art does exhibit a certain self-containedness, inasmuch as it produces a world which must be taken on its terms. Yet its significance lies in its status as an objectification of interpretative will to power. The work represents a putting-to-work of truth, though not in any Heideggerian sense of phrase, since truth must be seen as a function of the interpretative horizon opened by will to power.

Interpretative will to power, as a process of the continual accrual of power and mastery is frequently seen by Nietzsche as a process stimulated by the overcoming of resistance, by the negation of the Other.¹³ Nietzsche writes, for example, that 'will to power can only express itself against resistance; it searches for that which resists it' (KSA 12: 9 [151] p. 424), a conviction which he repeats in a note from 1887-8, claiming that 'All expansion, incorporation, growth is a striving against resistance, movement is essentially something bound up with states of displeasure' (KSA 13: 11 [111] p. 52). It is perhaps on the basis of this view of will to power that we can better understand why tragedy occupies such a cardinal place in Nietzsche's aesthetics, why tragedy should seem such a significant instantiation of the notion of art as an interpretative putting-to-work of truth. For the conjoining of Eternal Recurrence, Becoming and interpretative will to power which I am arguing occurs in art, occurs to a heightened degree in the tragic work of art.

As I argued in my chapter on *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche employs the aesthetics of the sublime as formulated by Kant, Schiller and others as the basis of his reading of tragedy and art in general. The tragic drama performs a twofold function: through its mimesis of destruction and negation it draws out the limits of human knowing, overthrowing all attempts at making meaning. As such it represents a general articulation of the human existential predicament, undertaking to achieve, in dramatic terms, what Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics performs in philosophical discourse, namely the attempt to dispel the belief in the fixity of the

order of signs. The second function, or what might be termed the positive moment of the dialectic, is then to overturn this negation of the belief in grammar and transform it into a challenge. A challenge both to open up a discursive space within which judgements concerning truth and falsity can be made, and also to accept the contingent nature of any such reconstructed interpretative horizon. In other words, the tragic work of art is a sensuous, artistic representation of the eternally present Becoming of interpretative will to power.

Hence while in many other ways he is explicitly opposed to the tradition of post-Kantian aesthetics, Nietzsche has here, perhaps unconsciously, appropriated a central element of the Idealist and Romantic philosophies of art in order to translate his most radical thoughts concerning truth, knowledge and time into the sphere of aesthetics. His reading of tragedy implies a certain way of understanding the meaning of truth and temporality, none of which is articulated fully at the time of the composition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, yet which comes to be confirmed in his later work, according to the interpretation I have given here. Moreover it is not an understanding which he rejects. In both his preface to the second edition of 1886 and in his commentary on the work in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche claims his major innovation to be the introduction of the notion of the Dionysian, and here I read the words 'Dionysian' and 'Dionysus', as they appear in his later work, to be rhetorical figures, metonyms for the whole dialectic of tragic wisdom outlined above. In his later writings the dialectic of Dionysian and Apollinian becomes supplanted by the oppositional pairs Dionysus and Christ (or the Crucified) and Dionysus and Socrates. Both form the function of symbolising the conflict between a metaphysical and non-metaphysical world interpretation (one hesitates to use the word post-metaphysical since as a temporal designation, it singularly fails to account for the Greek world view).

Following such a reading, one would have no difficulty either in countering the criticism of the young Nietzsche made by Eugen Fink¹⁴ that the Dionysian lacks conceptual clarity and is rather more intuited 'mystically'. Quite simply, the Dionysian is not a concept which could somehow be translated into 'clear', determinate conceptual language. It functions more as a metonym for the specifically artistic overcoming of metaphysical thinking, without being given the status of some mystic intuition.

The Temporal Ontology of Art

We have observed how the work of art, as an accomplishment of will to power, as the creation of a world, thematises the temporal process of Becoming and Eternal Recurrence, by producing a non-metaphysical permanence, or presence, and in the

tragic artwork, by producing a non-metaphysical world. In each of these aspects of art we find an implicit affirmation of immanence, a refusal to present a world that might transcend its own temporality, where human being is being-in-the-world and also being-in-time, and it is an evaluation which is affirmed. However, inasmuch as the temporality of the work of art represents an important weapon in Nietzsche's war against the metaphysics of the transcendent, the temporal ontology of art presents terrain needing further exploration.

In laying out a temporal ontology of art I intend to focus on two key areas within the work of art itself, namely, art's lack of interpretative finality and its thematising of its own materiality. I shall deal with each in turn.

A crucial aspect of Kant's Aesthetics is the notion that the aesthetic object is inhabited by an essential semantic ambiguity, and indeed it is this indeterminacy which in Kant makes aesthetic judgement into such an important vehicle for the free play of the imagination. Both in judgements of the beautiful and in judgements of the sublime the significant factor is the conceptual indeterminacy of the representation such that no objective finality can be imputed to it, for 'in order to represent an objective finality in a thing we must first have a concept of what sort of thing it is to be' (§ 15). This lack of a specific concept of what sort of thing the representation is meant to be, while usually seen as the distinguishing mark of free beauty (as opposed to dependent beauty) is extended in the *Analytic of the Sublime* to include both the sublime and the beautiful. Kant writes, 'the beautiful seems to be regarded as a presentation of an indeterminate concept of understanding, the sublime as a presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason' (§ 23).

In other words, the conceptual indeterminacy of the representation means that while the representation does seem to possess a certain internal finality, hence purposiveness, we can never truly establish with conviction what that purpose is. The imagination can supply possible final ends to the representation, but will never be able to rest on a final purpose. It is a process which Kant sees as providing an enhancement of life, noting that 'the beautiful is directly attended with a feeling of the furtherance of life, and is compatible with charms and a playful imagination' adding that 'the sublime is a pleasure . . . brought about by the feeling of a momentary check to the vital forces followed at once by a discharge all the more powerful' (*ibid.*).

In the case of the sublime, what defeats the possibility of any conceptual finality is the magnitude of the representation, which so threatens to overwhelm the senses that we pay no attention to trying to form a concept of what sort of thing it is. Crowther writes, for example, 'an animal of a definite species could be sublime. It would have to be of so monstrous a size that, psychologically speaking, we are so engrossed in the act of trying perceptually to apprehend its enormity that we pay

no attention to (indeed are wholly distracted from) the kind of animal it is. In this case the animal's very size is "contra-final".¹⁵

Significantly, Kant discusses art in the 'Analytic of the Sublime', rather than the 'Analytic of the Beautiful', since art, like the sublime, instead of merely producing a free play of the faculties, actually induces a tension between the imagination and understanding by the sensuous presentation of aesthetic ideas. Aesthetic ideas, i.e. those ideas of reason 'which language . . . can never get quite on level terms with or render completely intelligible' (§ 49) thus present an image in art which 'surpasses nature', able to 're-model imagination.' Now this chapter is not intended to offer a further discussion the Kantian sublime per se, however the brief excursus above is intended to support my claim that once again, Nietzsche, for all his putative opposition to Kantian aesthetics, has in fact reinscribed a crucial element of Kantian philosophy in the corpus of his own thinking. I shall elaborate further.

First, Kant's central claim concerning the purposiveness without purpose of the beautiful, or the conceptual indeterminacy of the sublime and art leads to the notion that the process of comprehending and apprehending the representation is never completed. More specifically, in cases of the mathematical sublime, for example, time would literally have to stand still for the subject to intuit the sublime in its limitless and infinite plenitude. Naturally this constitutes a paradox, since time is itself a form of intuition, and hence as a constituent of experience cannot be overcome. In other words the subject is caught in a temporal loop, robbed of any finality in its attempt to come to terms with the object of aesthetic judgement.

Second, Kant considers this to be an invigorating process, one which constantly remodels experience, one which encourages the functioning of the mental faculties. Even in the case of the sublime, which one might consider to be an entirely negative, because overwhelming, experience, Kant regards it as indirectly enhancing the cognitive faculties, causing an ever greater discharge of cognitive energies. This restructuring of experience which Kant accords to art introduces a theme repeated by Nietzsche, who claims in *Human All-too human* that 'religion and art (metaphysical philosophy too) take pains to transform sensibility, partly through transformation of our judgements about our experiences . . . partly through the awakening of pleasure in pain, in emotion per se (whence the art of the tragic serves as their starting point' (KSA 2 p. 107).

Focusing on these two particular aspects of Kant's theory, we see how easily they translate into Nietzsche's own philosophy of art. Most particularly in the notion of indeterminacy, which became a key element in both the art theories of the Romantics and in Hegel's analysis of Romantic art. It is moreover an

understanding of art which mimics the paradigm of knowledge-as-interpretation in Nietzsche's thought which I have emphasised throughout this thesis.

Ambiguity is a theme which runs throughout Nietzsche's writings, and most particularly his writings on the Romantic and the Classical, as cultural and artistic typological classifications. However its importance for Nietzsche first appears in his response to the music of Wagner, and to Wagner's compositional method, the so-called 'unendliche Melodie'. In the second book of *Human All-too human*, written when he had already become disaffected with the work of Wagner, Nietzsche nevertheless recognises the significance of Wagner's music. He notes, 'Perhaps this is the most essential of his innovations. His famous artistic means . . . strives at breaking all mathematical regularity of power and *time* [my italics] . . . and he is superabundant in the invention of such effects as sound to the older ear like rhythmical paradoxes and insults' (KSA 2 p. 434-5). Of course Nietzsche's assessment of Wagner's 'unendliche Melodie' will subsequently change, seeing the sense of disorientation in Wagner's as a sign of enfeebled will to power and lack of control. However, while Nietzsche might take exception to the paradoxes in the music of Wagner, in general he still imputes considerable importance to ambiguity in other art forms.

In the first volume of *Human All-too human* ascribes the effect of art to its lack of finality. He opens aphorism 178 with the title 'Incompleteness as that which is effective [das Wirksame]' (KSA 2 p. 161), and then elaborates how 'relief figures work so strongly on the imagination that they are, as it were, on the point of stepping off from the wall and suddenly, hindered somehow, come to a halt: similarly the relief-like representation of a thought, of a whole philosophy, is more effective than an exhaustive excursus' (ibid.). It is an argument he repeats in aphorism 199 of the same book, describing 'Incompleteness as an artistic stimulant' (KSA 2 p. 167), and claiming that 'Incompleteness is frequently more effective than completeness' (ibid.).

Indeed the entire section entitled 'From the soul of artists and writers' is littered with aphorisms which assert the importance of ambiguity and non-sense as an artistic stimulant. In § 213 he discusses the 'Joy in nonsense [Unsinn]' (KSA 2 p. 174) claiming that the 'overthrowing of experience into its opposite, of purposiveness into purposelessness . . . causes pleasure' (ibid.). Although he may claim to be deliberately challenging Kant's celebrated maxim of 'purposiveness without purpose', Nietzsche can here be seen rather to be merely pursuing to an extreme what is implicit in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. It is a way of thinking which points towards the later view expressed in 1888 that 'the aesthetic state has a superabundance of means of communication . . . it is the high point of communicability' (KSA 13: 14 [119] p. 296). Here I take Nietzsche to be referring to the ex-

cess of meaning in any particular work of art, for the aesthetic state 'is the source of languages . . . languages of tone as well as the languages of gesturing and looking' (ibid., pp. 296-7). It is a claim which supports the idea of the aesthetic state (and hence the work of art) as the site of the creation of meaning, rather than merely replicating predetermined patterns of signification.

The notion of the fragmentary, whose importance to German Romanticism is well attested¹⁶ remains a prime concern for Nietzsche, too. In *The Gay Science*, for example, he writes of 'The stimulus of incompleteness' noting that 'I see here a poet who, like many a person, achieves a higher stimulus with his imperfections than with everything which is well-rounded and perfectly formed in his hands' (KSA 3 p. 434). Continuing in this vein Nietzsche writes 'His work never completely expresses what he would like to express, what he would like to have seen: it appears as if he has had the foretaste of a vision, not the vision itself' (ibid.).

It is this adoption of a Kantian thematic which lies at the root of Nietzsche's celebration of plurality and ambiguity, the 'joy in uncertainty and polysemy' (KSA 5 p. 168) where 'the spirit thereby enjoys its plurality of masks and its artfulness . . . it feels best protected and concealed precisely through its Protean art' (ibid.). It is a conviction retained by Nietzsche up until his final writings, claiming in *Twilight of the Idols* that one is inevitably compromising oneself 'whenever one is consistent. Whenever one goes in a straight line. Whenever one is less than quinesemic [fünfdeutig]' (KSA 6 p. 122).

Nietzsche is not making a claim concerning all artistic forms of expression, for as I suggested earlier, he makes a typological distinction between Romantic and Classical which can be read as a metaphor for his own complex clash with Modernity. A note from 1887 entitled 'Aesthetica', makes quite clear the manner in which the notion of ambiguity becomes translated in Nietzsche's thinking into a specific problem for the modern. He argues, for example, that 'the preference for questionable and terrible things is a symptom of strength' (KSA 12: 10 [168] p. 556), repeating his claim later when he writes 'It is a sign of the feeling of power and well-being how much one can ascribe to things their terrifying, their questionable character; and whether one at all needs "resolutions" at the end' (ibid.).

Hence we conclude the 'strong' work of art refuses to produce any finality of meaning, instead affirming its own ambiguities, the ambiguities of the world it has created. As such it is bound up to the temporal structure of Eternal Return. The work of art, and here Nietzsche is still thinking primarily of tragedy, refuses to offer some final moment of resolution which would produce a moment of stasis. It thematises the lack of interpretative finality of the world in general, and hence we see all the more the connection between the world and the text, viewing the world

as a text, art as the world, an understanding which I have drawn on in the first chapter and which is corroborated in the reading of Nehemas.¹⁷

In stressing the significance of the incomplete, the fragmentary, the ambiguous in Nietzsche's aesthetics, I have also brought to prominence a problem in Nietzsche's work. For this does not appear to allow room for his so-called Dionysian classicism. An additional problem in this regard is brought to our attention by what Nietzsche writes further on in the 1887 Nachlaß note I have just quoted. He writes as follows; 'the artists of *décadence*, who at bottom stand nihilistically towards life, take refuge in the beauty of form . . . in the select things where nature became perfect [. . .] the "love of beauty" can thus be something other than the faculty of seeing the beautiful, of creating the beautiful: it can also be the expression of inability' (ibid. p. 557).

With these remarks Nietzsche seems to have overturned his prior schematic opposition of Romantic and Classic, or modern and amodern (I resist using the word post-modern because of the connotations already accruing to it). Previously the modern, or the *décadent*, bore the mark of disorganisation, lack of form and so forth, whereas in contrast the Classical is admired precisely because it represents a putting-to-work of will to power, an ability to control and master, a phenomenon I shall discuss in greater depth in the next chapter. Now the characteristics seem to be reversed. Additionally Nietzsche sees strength manifest not only in the beautiful but also in the ugly. In one of the Nachlaß notes of 1888 he argues, 'There is no pessimistic art . . . art affirms. Job affirms. But Zola ? de Goncourt ? The things they show are ugly, but that they show them comes from joy in the ugly . . . it's no good ! you are fooling yourselves if you claim otherwise. How liberating Dostoyevsky is !' (KSA 13: 14 [47]).

Need this be an insoluble problem ? An easy answer would be to deny the necessity of having to 'resolve' the difficulty, most especially in the context of the present chapter. However if we are attempting to understand why Nietzsche creates the problem for himself such an answer will seem less than satisfactory. Instead we may perhaps resolve the difficulty by turning to the ambiguous character of a wide variety of Nietzschean themes such as Nihilism, art, truth and so forth.

As I have previously argued, Nihilism is a bi-valent notion, implying both a reactive and an active response towards the death of God, i.e. the legitimacy crisis of Modernity . So too, if we extend his argument we can see this bi-valency operating in Nietzsche's critical aesthetics. The love of destruction, or of the terrible, for example can equally be the product of two very different attitudes. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche observes 'The longing for destruction, change, Becoming can be the expression of a superabundant power pregnant with the future (my term for that, as is known, is "Dionysian"); but it can also be the hate of the ill-constituted,

the disinherited, the underprivileged, who destroys, has to destroy, because that which is permanent, indeed all permanence, all Being itself, provokes it and arouses indignation' (KSA 3 p. 621). Likewise, in the same aphorism, Nietzsche claims that the will to eternalisation can be both a sign of strength, and here he gives the examples of Rubens, Goethe, Hafiz and Homer, and also of weakness, of resentment, symptomatic of which he finds Wagner and Schopenhauer.

By issuing such a disclaimer, is Nietzsche simply refusing to deal with the full difficulties of the problem? Initially this does seem to be the case, but on closer inspection, perhaps he can be defended from such a criticism. For once again to understand the meaning of Dionysian classicism, the active will to eternalisation and also to destruction, we have to return to the original scheme of *The Birth of Tragedy* and the dialectical interplay of affirmation and negation.

To recall, in *The Birth of Tragedy* the artistic process is constituted by a double movement of negation and affirmation. The Apollinian will to eternity must be disrupted by the negation of the Dionysian, which in turn must be mollified once again by the presentification of some form of permanence, no matter how contingent. In other words, it is a matter of recognising the necessity of some interpretative horizon, which must be affirmed, but whose contingency and hence *impermanence*, must also be affirmed. The horizon of interpretation must be affirmed together with its own negation in the dialectic of the contingent. It is a problem, the temporal aspect of which Nietzsche first broaches in 'On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life'.

I have already argued earlier in this chapter that Nietzsche employs the term 'Dionysian' in his later work as a metonym for the dialectic of Dionysian and Apollinian, of the simultaneous affirmation and negation of mundane semiosis. Given this reading, his Dionysian classicism is not merely a re-working of the Apollinian will to form, recast in the thematics of will to power. Rather, it is a will to form which is also a will to the dissolution of that particular formal configuration just achieved, as a necessary moment of tragic wisdom. What distinguishes Dionysian classicism from the classicism of the Modern is that the Modern seeks refuge in the form thus achieved, in a process that might be termed an 'ideology of the permanent'. In contrast, for Dionysian classicism, that sense of organisation, of harmony achieved does not function as some kind of therapy, or a redemptive turning away from Becoming. For it is permanence always-already waiting to be dissolved and re-figured, and in this way art can be said to be both creating perfection [Vollkommenheit] yet also functioning through its essential imperfection [Unvollkommenheit], and incompleteness [Unvollständigkeit].

Nietzsche's immanentism is fortified further in his philosophy of art by the attention he devotes to the artist's thematisation of the material constituting the

artwork. Generalising what is commonly regarded as the specific characteristic of artistic modernism, Nietzsche sees the preoccupation with the means of the artwork as an ahistorical feature of all genuinely artistic creativity, though without wanting to reduce art to a self-contained, autonomous praxis, or to read aesthetic rapture as a concern merely with the configuration of the formal elements of the work in a Kantian manner. He writes in 1888, for example, that 'the artist gradually comes to love the means whereby the states of rapture makes itself known for their own sake: the extreme subtlety and splendour of colour, the clarity of line, nuances of tone: the distinct, where elsewhere, normally, all distinction is lacking -: all distinct things, all nuances, inasmuch as they recall the extreme increases in strength that rapture produces' (KSA 13: 14 [47] p. 241).

In other words, rather than presenting the work of art as a self-effacing world-image, as a fiction which points beyond itself to some other, transcendent truth, the work foregrounds its own status as a work of human artifice, constituted by materials such as paint, stone, wood, or by a structure such as language or the tonic scale, as in music. As such this foregrounding of the material aspects of the work again emphasises the 'things of this world', to borrow Goethe's phrase which Nietzsche himself quotes. Nietzsche writes, 'To strive for desensualisation, that seems to me to be a misunderstanding or an illness or a cure, where it is not mere hypocrisy and self-deception' (KSA 11: 37 [12] p. 587), adding that 'it is a sign of having turned out well [Wohlgerathenheit] when one clings with ever more joy and warmheartedness to "the things of the world" - such that one holds fast to the great conception of the human, that the human becomes the transfigurer of existence, once he has learnt to transfigure himself' (ibid. pp. 587-8).

With this we are brought back by a circuitous route to Kant's aesthetics and perhaps, too, to Hegel. We recall that Kant attributed art's semantic indeterminacy to its embodiment of aesthetic ideas, these ideas being such that by their very nature they do not permit of adequate representation in forms wholly accessible to the concepts of the Understanding. In contrast, however, Nietzsche is committing himself to a claim that clashes sharply with Kant's view. No longer attempting to overcome the sensuous material of the work, treating it as if it were a hindrance, the artist draws attention to the material, consciously playing with its forms. Ultimately, of course, Nietzsche will arrive at a conclusion similar to that of Kant, and as I have suggested before, of Hegel too, most especially in the latter's treatment of Romantic art, namely that the work of art lacks determinate meaning. His reasons for coming to this conclusion, however, are notably different from either of the two earlier thinkers, as is clear from the foregoing discussion.

The significance of this brings us back to the question of immanence, for not only does this foregrounding of the material emphasise the sensuous, and bring

our attention to the actual fictional world created in such and such a fashion. It also draws attention to the process of artistic creation. Art as a self-conscious process of fictionalisation, art as a self-conscious manipulation of certain materials following specific techniques, both these features resist the notion of some spontaneous material embodiment of a transcendent truth, and rather bring to the fore art's status as *work*. As early as the first volume of *Human All-too human* (§ 162) Nietzsche had criticised the ideology of the genius, for precisely this reason, that it promotes the illusion of spontaneity, a quality praised at the expense of activity and work. As Nietzsche says, 'everything that is ready, perfect is admired, everything in the process of becoming is undervalued . . . The perfected art of representation dismisses all thought of Becoming, it tyrannises as present perfection' (KSA 2 p. 152).

I am not thereby claiming that Nietzsche attaches particular importance to work as a category of analysis in the Marxian fashion. A foregrounding of the nature of the work of art as a product of human artifice, however, as a something which takes place during a length of time, as opposed to the Enlightenment and Romantic ideologies of genius, can be seen as apparent in Nietzsche's writing. In this regard we can see too, then, the importance of the incomplete in art, as a means of foregrounding art as a process of Becoming, indeed as a means of foregrounding immanent Becoming per se.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have developed the discussion of Nietzsche's philosophy of art from his concern with the possibility of meaning articulated in *The Birth of Tragedy* to discussing the way art forms part of his more mature critique of metaphysics. In other words, whereas Nietzsche recognises the problem in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and sees tragedy as a manner of formulating a response to that problem, in his later work we see more specific ways whereby art undermines metaphysics. In particular I have outlined the complex of ideas concerning time, analysing how they challenge the redemptive structure of metaphysical thinking, and then seeing how they coalesce in the tragic work of art.

In particular, Nietzsche's criticism of the metaphysical notion of time as a linear succession of discrete points suggests an alternative idea of temporality to provide the basis for a more life-affirming, 'authentic' understanding of human being in the world. This involves coming to grips with the problem of the historicity of human existence and simultaneous need for amnesia, or ahistoricity, in order to be able to function as a moral agent and a thinking being.

Although Nietzsche here seems to have set off on a course which bears little relation to what has gone before, there is a strong internal unity between the questions of time, the dialectic of interpretation and sublimity. As we saw in the first two chapters, Nietzsche employs the dialectic of will to power to give shape to his theory of interpretation. The dialectic of interpretation provides for the non-cumulative increase of perspectives in a process which mimics the Hegelian path to Self-Consciousness, though without assuming the possibility of some telos. This process of interpretation, where each perspective is dissolved as soon as it comes into being, where useless perspectives are discarded and others preserved, is what I take Eternal Recurrence to be. As a model which has no place for the anagogy of metaphysics, the interpretative circle presents the possibility of infinite interpretivity - the world can be interpreted in an infinite number of ways, because as Nehamas says, it is always possible to produce different interpretations.

If we transpose this scheme to the sphere of art, then we see that the circle of interpretation finds its purest expression in art, thanks to the sublime, once more. In his mature writings Nietzsche has preserved the sublime in his understanding of art, but without the humanist and metaphysical trappings which accompanied the account in *The Birth of Tragedy*. For the sublime negation of the quotidian system of signs we identified as earlier taking place in the tragic annihilation of the hero is now manifest in the lack of interpretative finality of the artwork, a situation mirroring the idea that the aesthetic state is that state where the production of meaning (and hence the disruption of the previous web of meaning) takes place. Once again, though reluctant to admit it, Nietzsche has employed the conceptual resources of the tradition of aesthetics, more specifically of Kant, in order to formulate a supremely counter-metaphysical theory.

Having dealt with the relation of art to Nietzsche's rethinking of temporality we must now turn to that other key area where art plays a crucial role in rejecting redemptive thinking, namely in Nietzsche's physiology of art. In a manner parallel to the adoption of Eternal Recurrence as a counter-redemptive strategy, so too Nietzsche makes extensive use of physiological language to fortify his project, a turn which will bring together explicitly the questions of art and of will to power. It is to this topic that I now proceed.

Notes;

¹ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 686-7; 'The *speculative* interest of reason makes it necessary to regard all order in the world as if it had originated in the purpose of a supreme reason.'

² I am referring primarily to Pierre Klossowski's book *Nietzsche et le Cercle Vicieux* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1969), Joan Stambaugh's *Nietzsche's Thought of Eternal Return* (Baltimore:

Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972) and also the somewhat earlier work of Karl Löwith, *Nietzsches Philosophie der Ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1956).

³ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. D. Krell et al. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991) Volume II, 'The Eternal Recurrence of the Same.'

⁴ David Wood, 'Nietzsche's Transvaluation of Time' in Wood, *The Deconstruction of Time* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1989).

⁵ Significantly, Klossowski and Wood agree that the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence does not imply the universal repetition of everything, but is also a selective process.

⁶ Reinhardt Knodt, in 'Das Leiden und das Lachen. Zum Denken über die Zeit bei Schopenhauer und Nietzsche', *Schopenhauer Studien* 3 (1989), has made a useful comparison of Nietzsche's critique of linear time with that of Schopenhauer, pointing out, for example, that the latter equates subjective time with linear time, in contrast to the goalless strivings of the Will, which naturally give priority to a cyclical notion of temporality. Yet although Schopenhauer views cyclical time as more primordial than the (Aristotelian) idea of time as a linear succession of 'nows', he then reverts back to more traditional notions of temporality and redemption when he stresses the ability of the ascetic or the person held by an aesthetic experience, to elude the strivings of the Will, and hence to escape from time itself. The notion of transcendence in Schopenhauer is naturally opposed to a cyclical idea of time, thus revealing a considerable distance between Schopenhauerian time and Nietzsche's 'circulus vitiosus deus'.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) § 20 'temporality [Zeitlichkeit] and Temporality [Temporalität]' p. 280.

⁸ In this regard the difference between what I regard as the Nietzschean position and that of Derrida becomes clear. The logic of the trace in Derrida demands that we first refuse to grant full presence to the present and second recognise that the past was never fully present, being the mere trace of the trace. In contrast, Nietzsche's thinking constitutes an inversion of this position, whereby the past is never fully past, by virtue of the fact that it inscribes itself on the mark of the present.

⁹ In referring to temporality I am preserving the orthographical distinction made by Robinson & Macquarrie between temporality and Temporality. The former denotes 'Zeitlichkeit', as the temporal structure of Being-in-the-world, and the latter 'Temporalität', as the most general horizon within which Being is understood within time. The relation of the two would be analogous to that between 'ontic' and 'ontological' or 'existentiell' and 'existential'.

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962) § 65 p. 377.

¹¹ Vattimo has made a similar point in *The End of Modernity*, pp. 99 ff., noting Heidegger's complicity in Modernity's secularisation of redemption, inasmuch as cardinal importance is laid on projection.

¹²Adrian del Caro, 'Dionysian Classicism, or Nietzsche's Appropriation of an Aesthetic Norm', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (1989) pp. 589-605. Del Caro argues that Nietzsche's return to some form of Classical norm is partly inspired by Goethe, who shared his antipathy towards Romanticism. Significantly, as del Caro points out (p. 594), Nietzsche's diagnosis of Romanticism as being a sickly phenomenon was one already made by Goethe, who also regarded Classicism as essentially healthy in contrast.

¹³The many passages where Nietzsche relates will to power to negation makes it difficult to accept the influential reading of Deleuze, already mentioned in chapter one, which sees Nietzsche as a thinker of pure affirmativity, unless Deleuze thereby means Nietzsche's affirmation of the process of negation. However, the fact that Deleuze seeks to distance Nietzsche from Hegel on precisely this point, where in my interpretation they could be seen as being closest, suggests that is not the case. Indeed Deleuze prefers to see the significance of negation as subordinate to the function of affirmation, concluding that Nietzsche 'is opposed to all thought which trusts in the element of the negative, which makes use of negation as a motor, a power and a quality' (p. 179).

¹⁴Eugen Fink, *Nietzsches Philosophie*, (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960) p. 27.

¹⁵Paul Crowther, *The Kantian Sublime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) p. 153.

¹⁶See, for example, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, trans. Philip Barnard & Cheryl Lester, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), especially pp. 39 - 58.

¹⁷Alexander Nehemas, *Nietzsche. Life as Literature*.

Contra Kant: Art and Physiology

In my last chapter I explored Nietzsche's pre-occupation with models of time as tools in his wider counter-metaphysical, counter-redemptive strategy of thinking. As such we might say that he develops the temporal aspect of the 'immanent'. The notion of transcendence, however, is one which has both a temporal and a spatial dimension, and the concept consequently depends on extensive use of spatial and temporal metaphors for its exposition. This has become apparent from the discourse of the sublime, which in the eighteenth century relied heavily on the metaphor of transport, itself derived from the vocabulary of Longinus. We can see this, too, for example, in Heidegger's analysis of ekstasis, where Dasein not only projects itself forward into its own futural horizon, but also goes *beyond* itself - as if Dasein could physically leave its current embodied location and survey its own possibilities from some non-locatable Archimedean point.¹

It is this aspect of transcendence, as a spatial remove from mundanity (and the double meaning of 'mundane' as 'earthly' and also 'trivial, average, unexceptional' indicates the negative value attached to worldhood) which we shall see Nietzsche criticising in this chapter. Once again it will fall to art to act as the site where the individual is brought back to earth and rooted firmly in the world, and more specifically it will be the relation of art and the body which will achieve this goal.

Eric Blondel, in his magisterial book on Nietzsche and the body² has exhaustively analysed the linguistic structure of Nietzsche's texts, pointing out not only the metaphors of the body that Nietzsche uses extensively, but also his purposeful lack of any uniform style, his frequent refusal to present logical propositions (see, for example, paragraph § 125 of *The Gay Science* which presents the reader with some thirty one unanswered questions in the space of two pages), his use of active substantive verbs instead of nominal abstract terms, and finally his refusal to present clear, unambiguous 'concepts' (such as the notoriously difficult 'Eternal Recurrence' or his claim that 'Truth is a woman'). Hence Blondel helps us to understand the significance of, for example, Nietzsche's frequently employed metaphor of interpretation as a gastric or digestive process³. The weakness in Blondel's book, however, lies in his interpretation that the hidden referent of all of Nietzsche's rhetorical strategies is the body *tout court*. Blondel is right to criticise those who would see the stylistic diversity in Nietzsche as a joyful affirmation of textual play and little else, accusing such readings of resulting in a fetish of the text.⁴ However, by setting the body outside the economy of signification in this manner, Blondel runs the danger of reaffirming what Nietzsche with his various

strategies is trying to undercut, namely the notion of a transcendent signified, albeit paradoxically characterised as human embodiment. Additionally, given Nietzsche's awareness of the all pervasive grip of language on human thinking, one would have to object that for Nietzsche the body is itself already a codified entity, reified by the process of its articulation in language. Thus when Blondel sees the Nietzschean body (and Blondel is here implying the 'Leib' rather than the more biological 'Körper') as a descendant of the Kantian transcendental subject, with Schopenhauer as the mediator, there are strong grounds for disagreement. Rather, one should see Nietzsche's emphasis on the body as one more strategy designed to guide us away from the metaphysical goal of transcendence and towards an understanding of the immanence of human being in the world. Thus the body is important to Nietzsche not as an end in itself, but as a means to ground human thinking thoroughly in the world of the 'Here and Now', the 'Diesseits' both temporally and spatially, rather than being oriented toward the Beyond, the 'Jenseits', and as I have argued in chapter four it is this concern with the immanent which is the cause of his break with Wagner.

I have already indicated in chapter two the ways in which Nietzsche literally deconstructs the metaphysical concept of subjecthood, by first pulling apart the atomic Cartesian subject and then substituting an alternative, less constricted model of selfhood. In the process a key role is given to the recognition of the body as a determinant of thinking, an interpretation which must have been informed to some extent by Nietzsche's reception of Lange's *History of Materialism* in 1866, a way of thinking which may well have been influenced, too, by some of Schopenhauer's pronouncements on the body.⁵ In *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer expounds a physiologism so crass as to appear satiric of contemporary biological and medical science noting, for example, that people engaged in intellectual argument are frequently no longer capable of movement, since 'as soon as their brain has to link a few ideas together, it no longer has as much force left over as is required to keep the legs in motion through the motor nerves . . .'⁶ Naturally while for Schopenhauer the body is the problem to be overcome, it nevertheless does represent an awareness of the importance of the body which Nietzsche takes over when he exhorts the reader in *Ecce Homo* to 'Sit as little as possible; give no credence to any thought that was not born outdoors while one moved about freely - in which the muscles are not celebrating a feast, too. All prejudices come from the intestines' (KSA 6 p. 281). In the same section of *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche writes that 'genius is determined by dry air, by clear skies - that is by a rapid metabolism, by the possibility of drawing again and again on great, even tremendous quantities of strength' (KSA 6 p. 282), a sentiment that finds itself repeated in the more pithy

claim in *Beyond Good and Evil* that 'The abdomen is the reason why a person does not take himself too easily for a god' (KSA 5 p. 97).

Of course it is more than a little misleading to compare Nietzsche's interest in physiology with Schopenhauer's thinking on the body for the reason given above. While Schopenhauer acknowledges its potency, he is still concerned to free the mind from its effects, regarding it quite clearly as a hindrance to the process of thinking. In contrast Nietzsche sees the body as one of the many determinants of thinking, and as such is what makes thought what it is, indeed facilitates it. Far from seeking to exclude it from serious consideration, he mentions it at every available opportunity, describing most cultural phenomena in physiological or neurological terms. Richard Brown⁷ has recently listed some 20 different applications of the term 'physiology' and 'physiological' in Nietzsche's analysis of contemporary culture and thought, including his view of Wagnerian theatre as a product of 'physiological degeneration' (KSA 6 p. 27), his definition of Modernity as a 'physiological contradiction' (KSA 6 p. 143) and his claim that ascetic priests are 'physiologically inhibited' (KSA 5 p. 383).

In addition to the cases Brown lists there is of course Nietzsche's general description of Nihilism as a symptom and a medical condition. Earlier I outlined one of Nietzsche's explanations for the onset of Nihilism, namely the misreading of the nature of signs. Yet the genealogy of Nihilism must go back further beyond this phenomenon of misinterpretation and analyse the physiology of the organism which has so easily taken the semiotic universe for something more. Nietzsche's genealogical analysis of Christian morality, of the ascetic ideal is well known for uncovering that decadent form of life which bestowed a particular meaning on the terms 'good' and 'bad'. However, the notion of morality as a symptom, or 'sign-language' [Zeichensprache] of a specific physiological condition predates the *Genealogy of Morals*. In *The Dawn* Nietzsche claims moral judgements to be derived from feelings of pleasure and displeasure, when he writes 'Is not the origin of all moral judgement to be found in heinous little conclusions: "whatever harms me is something evil (harmful in itself); whatever aids me is something good (beneficial and useful in itself) . . ." ' (KSA 3 p. 90). In *The Gay Science* he makes the clear connection between morality and physiology all the more explicit saying that 'Whoever intends to now conduct a study of moral affairs is opening up for themselves an immense field of work. All kinds of passion will have to be individually considered . . . Are we acquainted with the moral effects of means of nourishment? is there a philosophy of nutrition?' (KSA 3 p. 379). If we accept Richard Schacht's reading⁸ the core of *The Gay Science* is constituted by the fifth book, which amounts to a physiological anthropology of Man after the death of God, aiming to write both a 'natural history' of modern humanity and on this basis

to effect a transformation not just of the values which were so dependent on the belief in God, but also of the natural constitution of the organism which required such values in the first place. This represents an understanding of the origins of value which pervades Nietzsche's thought until his last, unpublished, notes, from his claim in *Beyond Good and Evil* that 'in short morals are merely a sign language of the affects' (KSA 5 p. 107) to the list from the summer of 1888 which includes 'Inartistic conditions: consumption, impoverishment, evacuation - will to nothing. Christian, Buddhist, Nihilist. Impoverished body' (KSA 13: 17 [9] p. 530). Hence Nietzsche's note from 1886 which sums up 'My attempt to understand moral judgements as symptoms and sign languages, where the processes of physiological success or decline betray themselves' (KSA 12: 2 [165] p. 149). Ultimately, too, it is possible to trace this path of thought back to its origins in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where Nietzsche pointedly explains Socrates' behaviour as the product of a certain instinct (I say pointedly because of course Socrates and Plato were determined to eliminate instinct and the passions from any acts of cognition and judgement).

Given this general strategy of understanding values and morality in terms of the body, it is clear that Nietzsche will interpret the particular, contemporary, crisis of Nihilism in exactly the same terms as his more universal understanding of the formation of value. Accordingly he interprets Modernity from this perspective, and in his later work treats Wagner the Romantic as a case study of the wider physiological and psychological disorder of the modern age.⁹ This modern neurosis finds its most powerful artistic expression in Wagner's work. As Nietzsche says, 'The art of Wagner is sick. The problems he brings on stage - problems of pure hysterics - his convulsive affectivity, his hyperstimulated sensibility . . . not least his choice of heroes and heroines, looked at as physiological types (a gallery of invalids ! -): all this together presents an image of sickness which leaves no room for doubt. Wagner est une névrose' (KSA 6 p. 22).

With this diagnosis of Wagner's work Nietzsche clears the way for the approach which he deems necessary for an understanding of Wagner's, and his own, culture. Nihilism, or at least what Nietzsche terms 'passive' Nihilism, is born when two contradictory impulses collide head on. On the one hand there is the desire for truth and certainty as fostered by morality, the faith in science's achievements, the philosophers' faith in logic, while on the other there is the recognition that the institutions which have guaranteed us that sense of stability in the world may not have the legitimacy that has been invested in them. The recognition of the latter clashes with the desire for the former, and hence the feeling of disarray and conflict which follows, a condition which Nietzsche sees as the 'logic of our great values and ideals when thought through to their end' (KSA 12: 11 [411] p. 190). This crisis is one

which we are all part of, in Nietzsche's reading, and following his physiological interpretation of value, implies we are all somehow physiologically defective. In the epilogue to *The Case of Wagner* he observes that 'Unknowingly, against our will, we all have values, words, formulae, morals of contradictory bodily origins - considered physiologically, we are false . . . A diagnosis of the modern soul - where would it begin ? . . . with a vivisection conducted on its most instructive case' (KSA 6 p. 53).

Following this brief account it becomes clear that Nietzsche's use of medical imagery in his treatment of modern culture forms a central component of his cultural critique, and is not, as Heidegger argues, an unfortunate aberration. On the question of the body, Heidegger's lectures on Nietzsche betray a not inconsiderable desire to underplay the significance of the corporeal in the latter's thinking, as Michel Haar has recently noted.¹⁰ Heidegger writes, for example, that 'When Nietzsche says "physiology" he does mean to emphasise the bodily state; but the latter is in itself always already something psychical,'¹¹ thereby converting the Nietzschean body into the 'psycho-physiological body' [Leib] of phenomenology. The extent of this difference between the two thinkers becomes most apparent when we find Heidegger admitting that he finds it 'strange and almost incomprehensible' that Nietzsche should want 'to make his conception of the aesthetic state accessible . . . by speaking the language of physiology and biology' (*Nietzsche* I p. 113) as if this were to be interpreted as an embarrassing 'mistake' on Nietzsche's part, rather than a central element of his entire understanding of the aesthetic experience.

The motivation for Heidegger's interpretation is clear, for it is borne of the desire to interpret Nietzsche within the horizon of fundamental ontology, which involves the paradox of assimilating Nietzsche to the metaphysical tradition, yet also of appropriating his work such that Nietzsche can be seen to be concerned with the same questions as Heidegger, principally, of course, the question of the meaning of Being. Hence within the narrower sphere of the aesthetic we notice that far from being rooted in bodily processes, the Nietzschean aesthetic state becomes, in Heidegger's reading, an attunement [Gestimmtheit] to the beautiful, or a mood [Stimmung], both being key words in the Heideggerian project from *Being and Time* onwards, and both involving a subjection of human Dasein to the prior disclosure of Being.¹²

The Nietzschean state of intoxication here becomes an ek-static dissolution of subjectivity through the appearance of the beautiful,¹³ in a move which works hard at identifying the thought of Nietzsche with that of Heidegger's recently completed lecture on 'The Origin of the Work of Art.' In this respect it is important to recall, as does Haar, that in the first, unpublished, version of the lecture on the ori-

gin of the work of art Heidegger explicitly dissociates pleasure [Genuss] from the idea of any authentic aesthetic experience, referring to it instead as an overheating of the system [Erhitzung]. In this Heidegger has wandered far from the Nietzschean position which refers to 'the pleasurable state which is known as rapture' (KSA 13: 14 [117] p. 294), and one which declares that 'a Raphael is unthinkable without a certain overheating of the sexual system' (ibid. p. 295).

On the surface, Heidegger's observations, first that Nietzsche is trying to describe the physis of the *whole* Man with the word 'physiology', second that the affective state is not one that could be reduced to the ontic science of physiology, and third that 'ontic' physiology cannot explain the sublimation of bodily drives into the positing of aesthetic values, admittedly deserve attention. However if one were consequently to downplay the 'biological' elements within Nietzsche's oeuvre one might be guilty of misunderstanding the strategic nature of Nietzsche's turn to the body. Additionally, Heidegger's objections to the use of the vocabulary of biology must moreover be set within the context of his wider tendency to avoid questions concerning the body. As with the question of time, so too with the question of the body, Heidegger's opposition to the 'metaphysical' conception of the self, which he sees as largely bound up with the Christian tradition, undercuts its own claims through his desire to fight shy of human embodiment.

Heidegger's explicit target in his analysis of Dasein is the Cartesian world-less subject, manifest in Descartes' concept of 'consciousness as such', which Heidegger terms a 'fanciful idealisation' (*Being and Time*, p. 272). Yet having declared his opposition to the tradition of mind - body dualism, he then attempts to cover up the one element which would serve to bind the subject most closely to the world. Analysing the spatiality of Dasein, Heidegger carefully avoids relating the experience of space to human embodied being, claiming that 'Bringing-close is not oriented towards the I-thing encumbered with a body,' and adding that 'Dasein's spatiality is not to be defined by citing the position at which some corporeal thing is present-at-hand' (ibid., p. 142). Likewise in the Nietzsche lectures Heidegger attempts to overcome the physiological body, spatial embodiment, in every way possible. Admittedly, he remarks that the body is not some hulk with which the soul is burdened, yet at the same time he refers to the understanding of the body as a natural body as a 'misinterpretation', seeing the bodily state as something which, in the work of art, 'is to be restrained, overcome and surpassed' (*Nietzsche* I p. 129).

Hence we find in Heidegger's lectures on Nietzsche a certain disregard of the physiological, to such an extent that on occasion the meaning of the Nietzschean text is strained to the limit, as can be seen when Heidegger notes, 'That Nietzsche conceives of the beautiful "biologically" is indisputable. Yet the question remains what "biological," *bios*, "life," mean here. In spite of appearances created by the

words, they do not mean what *biology* understands them to be' (ibid., p. 114). In other words Heidegger would have us believe that 'biology' does not actually mean what it means.

On the basis of this brief analysis we can therefore identify a tension between the Heideggerian 'Leib' and the Nietzschean physiological 'body'. If Heidegger establishes *Stimmung* as prior to the body, and in *Being and Time* he identifies *Stimmung* as an existiale adding in the Nietzsche lecture, for example, that *Stimmung* 'determines from the outset the implicative investment of the body in our Dasein' (ibid., p. 99), then in contrast Nietzsche looks for the origin of thinking in the organic processes of the body. In examining Nietzschean thinking on the body, and this will apply to the analysis of rapture in Nietzsche's aesthetics, we are going to have to distance ourselves from the Heideggerian interpretation. By keeping faithful to Heidegger we would have to express a certain incomprehension and even embarrassment at much of Nietzsche's rhetoric, a rhetoric which far from being an unfortunate distraction from the 'meaning' of his philosophy may well turn out to be a key element in its construction.

On the other hand, however there is nevertheless a sense in which the pertinence of some of Heidegger's objections has to be recognised. It is true, for example, that Nietzsche's scorn for the claims made on behalf of the 'knowledge' of the natural sciences is hard to reconcile with his pronounced use of the language of medicine and biology in his cultural criticism. Second, Nietzsche's perspectivism rules out the possibility of attributing *everything* to the body. Not only is the body not exhausted by its constitution in the discourse of medical science, but also, and here we offer another criticism of Blondel's book on the Nietzschean body, Nietzsche would be untrue to himself if he were to pursue a reductivist or purely materialist interpretation of culture and value. As if one could posit a simple relation of cause and effect between certain physiological conditions and corresponding cultural phenomena. As if the perspective of the body were the *only* perspective one could adopt in the analysis of value and thinking. Nietzsche himself is too canny to want to make such errors, and as early as *The Dawn* he recognises that a crude materialist understanding cannot hope to exhaust the complexity of the positing of values. In § 34 he claims that moral concepts are merely to be seen as a post hoc rationalisation of the actions we have undertaken on the basis of our moral feelings (KSA 3 p. 43). As such Nietzsche is emphasising the constitutive role of the instinctual in the formation of values. However, the aphorism following the one just quoted consists of a qualification of that earlier position when Nietzsche claims that 'feelings are nothing final, original; behind feelings there are judgements, valuations, which have been passed on to us in the form of feelings (inclinations, disinclinations). The inspiration which originates in a feeling is the grandchild of a

judgement - and often a false one !' (KSA 3 p. 43-4). In other words Nietzsche is satisfied with neither a simple dualism of mind and body, nor any attempt to reduce the one to the other; each turns out to be both a function and a determinant of the other.

Nietzsche's apparently inconsistent positions on the matter of the body present us with a problem if we read him as trying to express an objective truth concerning the production of concepts or cultural formations. However, if we read him as turning to the body as a rhetorical strategy the significance of his biological vocabulary is altered and the reservations of Heidegger are in many respects bypassed. The choice of physiology as a perspective on culture can be seen, as I have noted, as a strategy aimed at overcoming the world-denying aspects of metaphysics, Christian religious feeling and contemporary morality. In addition, however, Nietzsche's use of physiology performs a further function when dealing with the question of art and aesthetics. For if art is going to be the type of practice which is to serve as an interpretative foundation for post-metaphysical culture, and we have seen this clearly to be the case in *The Birth of Tragedy* and also in my discussion of the relation of art and Eternal Recurrence, Nietzsche is going to have to challenge the prevailing orthodoxies regarding the meaning of art and artists. Since, as I shall be arguing, the aesthetic tradition can be seen to have acted in complicity with metaphysics, Nietzsche will first have to release art from its appropriation by metaphysics in order then to suggest how it can take on the enormous burden of importance he attaches to it. We have seen the indications of this function in the last chapter, where certain artistic forms embody a counter-metaphysical temporal structure, indeed constitute the arena where Eternal Recurrence and interpretative will to power come together. In a like manner, the physiology of art will indicate ways in which art can be thought differently, and more importantly, non-metaphysically. For Nietzsche develops his 'physiology of art' as a specific response to the notion of disinterestedness and aesthetic experience from Kant onwards, and it is to this aspect of his work that we must now turn our attention.

The Physiology of Aesthetic Experience

Much of Nietzsche's mature writing on art, artists and aesthetics gains its identity from the tradition of thought it sets out to oppose, and this affects his physiology of art in particular. For he mobilises the metaphor of the body, he utilises the vocabulary of medicine as part of a wider strategy to overcome a variety of modes of thinking about art, from the 'decadent' aesthetics of Richard Wagner to the ever growing movement within aesthetic Modernism which fosters the belief in art for art's sake, *l'art pour l'art*.

In terms of actual practising artists, Nietzsche singles out Wagner and Victor Hugo as targets of attack, while the one philosopher who, for Nietzsche, embodies all the worst aspects in the history of philosophical aesthetics, is seen to be Kant. In the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche accuses Kant of possessing the 'naiveté of a country parson' (KSA 5 p. 347) when it comes to understanding aesthetic experience. In *The Antichrist* § 11 Nietzsche observes that 'Kant became an idiot' adding that Kant represents a 'mistaken instinct in everything and anything, the counter-natural as instinct, German *décadence* as philosophy' (KSA 6 p. 177-8). In his private notes he is no less uncharitable to the great 'Chinaman of Königsberg' accusing him of 'clumsy pedantry and petty bourgeois manners' (KSA 11: 26 [96] p. 175), and concluding that the Critique of Pure Reason is 'already the pre-existent form of cretinism' (KSA 13: 16 [55] p. 504).

This hostile position towards Kant forms one of the paradoxes in Nietzsche's thought, of course. For I have already shown in previous chapters the extent to which Nietzsche's thinking on art derives either directly or indirectly from Kant himself. It is an ambiguous relation which Nietzsche tries all the more to hide by the virulence of his denunciations of Kant, and specifically of the latter's aesthetic theory. Kant has not been without his defenders against the polemic of Nietzsche. Most notably, of course, Heidegger is anxious to defend Kant against the criticism levelled against him, claiming instead that Nietzsche is reading Kant through the interpretation of Schopenhauer, which is itself a highly partial misunderstanding of the latter's aesthetics.¹⁴ More recently, other scholars such as Mihailo Djuric and Urs Heftrich have taken a similar line, both defending Kant and then arguing that in any case his criticisms are more relevant to the aesthetics of Schopenhauer than to those of Kant himself.¹⁵ In many ways these objections cannot be faulted, and as Heftrich demonstrates, many of Nietzsche's criticisms of notions such as disinterestedness and subjective universality are based on, at best, a careless reading of Kant, and almost certainly one that is shaped by the mediating figure of Schopenhauer.

I do not intend to discuss those precise areas where Nietzsche misreads Kant's *Critique of judgement*, for this would be to duplicate the studies of Heftrich and Djuric. Moreover such a detailed and in depth analysis is, it might be claimed, missing the mark. If we ask ourselves why Nietzsche is so vehement in his criticisms of Kant's aesthetic theory, we might find an answer in the fact that the name 'Kant' in many ways performs a metonymic function, standing as an abbreviated sign for what Nietzsche perceives as the tradition of aesthetics from Kant onwards. The significance of Kant lies in his having overturned the tradition of Wolff and Baumgarten, transforming aesthetics from being a discipline subordinate to the more masculine rigour of logic, to the core element within the architectonic of the

Critical project, giving art a cognitive function previously denied it. Rightly considered the founder of modern aesthetics, Kant relocated the discipline at the heart of philosophical thinking, and in many respects shaped the course of all subsequent enquiry into the subject up to the present day.

By naming Kant as the target of his polemic, Nietzsche is in effect conducting a genealogy of aesthetics, bringing to prominence those elements within Kant which were to be central to subsequent thinking in the realm of the aesthetic. Hence by reading Kant through Schopenhauer, Nietzsche need not be seen as simply misreading him, though that also does happen to be true of the latter's reading. Rather he can be seen as focusing on precisely those aspects of Kant which were important to Schopenhauer, and hence to Wagner, and also to the aesthetic of *l'art pour l'art*. Implicit in this, too, is an attempt to distance himself from his own earlier writing, which, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, he recognised as still labouring under the burden of Kantian and Idealist vocabulary. As in all aspects of his work, Nietzsche is not so much concerned with the past *per se* as with the manner in which it has shaped the present.

If we wish to analyse the specific areas where Nietzsche chooses to take issue with Kant, it becomes clear that a major confrontation occurs over the notion of disinterestedness. Significantly for the present chapter, Nietzsche forms a critique of the notion of disinterested aesthetic experience (and its concomitant notion of a disinterested aesthetic subject) in the name of physiology. Deriving aesthetic judgement from the physiology of the human organism, Nietzsche thus occupies a position which proves hostile to any theory which will attempt to separate out questions of beauty from those of desire¹⁶. Before I outline in greater detail Nietzsche's specific criticism of disinterestedness, however, I shall first describe briefly the genealogy of the idea which Nietzsche is attacking.

If we turn to the notion of disinterestedness, we have to distinguish between its initial formulation in Kant and subsequent reception by the Romantics, Schopenhauer and so forth. When Kant says that 'Taste is the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest'¹⁷ he is asserting that our concern with the aesthetic object is not one based on an interest in whether or not it actually exists. In other words he is not claiming that we do have any interest *per se* in the beautiful object, for in a later section (§ 42) of the Third Critique, he indicates the presence of a kind of interest in the object which he terms 'intellectual interest', however this interest does not focus on the *existence* of the object, which would be the province of desire, but rather on its purely formal properties. This aspect of the judgement of taste is central to Kant's project, since it is linked to his contention both that the beauty of an object is not related to an end (the third moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful) and that the

beautiful object pleases apart from any concept of what it is or should be (fourth moment). Both of these latter claims, together with the notion of disinterestedness serve to dissociate the aesthetic object from considerations of means and ends, in other words, distinguish the aesthetic experience of the object from the experience of it as something to be utilised. As a symbol of morality, the beautiful does engage our interest on one level, yet this 'intellectual' interest is to be distinguished from the interest in the object as a means to self-preservation or advancement. It is a distinction which allows us to understand why we can allow fictional events or objects to affect us while we know they do not actually exist, without having to resort to contemporary theories of make-believe, such as in Kendall Walton's book, *Mimesis as Make-believe*, which proposes the curious notion that fiction is a game of make-believe into which the spectator knowingly enters, and that emotional responses to what are known to be fictional events are in fact 'pretend' responses.¹⁸

By drawing a distinction, however, between the aesthetic object (and this is increasingly equated with the work of art in writers after Kant) on the one hand and the realm of the practical (i.e. of desire) on the other, Kant is laying himself open to the kind of appropriation which Schopenhauer makes of his work, once the latter has transformed desire, or the Will, into a metaphysical principle. The subtle distinction between intellectual interest and desire is ignored in favour of a more simple opposition in Schopenhauer between willing and non-willing. The aesthetic experience is one devoid of all volition or interest in Schopenhauer, and hence an experience which is given a metaphysical significance in Schopenhauer's system it did not possess in Kant. Likewise the beautiful object, by virtue of its belonging to a sphere independent of the realm of utility, appeals to the Romantics as a site of resistance to the encroachment of the (conceptually bound) kingdom of means and ends, and from here we can follow the path leading to Modernism and the Avant-Garde where art, as a site of resistance to modern culture, becomes increasingly self-absorbed and purely self-critical, a characteristic feature to which Peter Bürger, amongst others, has drawn attention.¹⁹

If we restrict our analysis of this development to the nineteenth century, i.e. to that which would have been known to Nietzsche, we find the idea of the autonomy of art pursued to its most extreme conclusion in formalist writings of the German musicologist Eduard Hanslick, and more prominently, the poets of *l'art pour l'art* such as Gautier and symbolists such as Mallarmé in France, who empty art of the moral content which even the Romantics had accorded it, instead transforming it into an enclosed sphere of self-reference²⁰. Attempting to free art from morality, such writers have, for Nietzsche, trivialised art, and it is Kant he criticises for essentially proposing the idea of aesthetic experience without interest. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* he mocks the contemporary (pseudo-Kantian) belief in disinter-

estedness asserting that 'If our aestheticians never tire of claiming, in Kant's favour, that spellbound by beauty one can even view of undraped female statues "without interest", then one can laugh a little at their expense . . . in any case Pygmalion was not an "unaesthetic human" ' (KSA 5 p. 347). Further in the same section he notes Schopenhauer's indebtedness to this same idea, challenging the notion of willless aesthetic experience with the observation that far from displaying no interest in the aesthetic experience, Schopenhauer was greatly interested in it, indeed positively craved it as a release from the blind mechanism of the Will. In Nietzsche's eyes Schopenhauer's subscription to the idea of a willless aesthetic experience is self-defeating, since the aesthetic is invested with a particular function or use value which enmeshes it within the system of means and ends, in short, the economy of desire, and thus brings it close to Stendhal's idea of an art that contains 'une promesse de bonheur.' It is this weakness in the entire notion of willless aesthetic experience in Schopenhauer's philosophy which leads Nietzsche to demand, in *Beyond Good and Evil* that 'the aesthetics of "contemplation devoid of all interest" which is used today as a seductive guise for the emasculation of art', an aesthetics which he equates with the Christian ethic of self-sacrifice, 'be questioned mercilessly and put on trial' (KSA 5 p. 52).

In *Twilight of the Idols* he devotes a substantial passage to a critique of the Modernism of *l'art pour l'art*, countering the desire of those to free art from morality and hence render it 'purposeless, goalless, senseless' with the following series of rhetorical questions: 'what does all art do ? does it not praise ? does it not glorify ? does it not select out ? does it not bring to prominence ? With all this it strengthens or weakens certain judgements of value . . . is this incidental ? a coincidence ?' (KSA 6 p. 127).

Far from occupying a completely autonomous sphere of self-reference, art, in Nietzsche's thought, refers beyond itself to the world, in as much as it constitutes the material expression of a certain relation towards the world. As Nietzsche says, 'Art is the great stimulant to life: how could one conceive of it as without purpose, as goalless, as *l'art pour l'art* ?' (ibid.). Yet although the specific opposition to *l'art pour l'art* is a product of Nietzsche's mature thought, brought about by his linking of art and will to power, the development of his theory after *The Birth of Tragedy* can be traced without difficulty. Already in the first volume of *Human All-too Human* the notion of art as a means of coming to terms with the world, of rendering it bearable, is being transformed into that of art as an affirmation of the world. In the section entitled 'From the Soul of the Artists and Writers' he writes that art has 'taught us for thousands of years to look upon life in every shape with interest and desire and to bring our feelings to the point where we finally shout: "however it is, life is good" ' (KSA 2 p. 185). In the second book of *The Gay*

Science Nietzsche offers a lengthy discussion of the origin of poetic metre and rhythm, which stands in clear opposition to the view of, say, Mallarmé, who proclaims that 'language speaks itself' (la langue se parle). Nietzsche claims that the use of rhythm in poetry originates in the ancient conviction that its use could enable humans to exercise some power over the gods. For it had long been recognised that music has 'the power to unload the affects, to purify the soul, to mollify the ferocia animi - and especially through the rhythmical in music' (KSA 3 pp. 440-1), and it was assumed that it would effect the gods in the same fashion. Hence poetry finds its origin in invocations to the gods, attempting 'to compel them through rhythm and exercise a power over them' (ibid.).

Now the significance of this interpretation does not lie in Nietzsche's observation that rhythm has a certain power over the human affects, for he freely admits that Pythagoras (not to mention Plato) had already understood this, and he would not be saying anything very interesting. Instead, what deserves our attention is his claim, no matter how incorrect from an anthropological and historical point of view, that early humans used this awareness in order to try to control the gods, and hence by implication the natural environment. In other words, rhythm was utilised as a means of controlling the world, getting a purchase on it, and hence is intimately bound up to questions of means and ends, utility and desire.

As Pütz puts it,²¹ art finds its ground in life, and although will to power has not yet been articulated in Nietzsche's work at this stage, art in the form of poetic rhythm is clearly motivated by will to power. It is a claim supported in the aphorism following the discussion of poetry, which discusses the beautiful. In this aphorism he asserts that 'Artists are always elevating - they do not do anything else - and moreover all those situations and things which are reputed to make a person feel good or great or drunk or merry or well and wise. These *select* things . . . are the objects of the artist' (ibid. pp. 442-3). The states of being which the artist promotes are precisely those states which are engendered by will to power, and the emphasis which Nietzsche lays on the selectivity of the artist will have important consequences for articulating the relation between will to power and Nietzsche's later aesthetic norm of Dionysian Classicism.

The notion of *l'art pour l'art*, stemming in Nietzsche's view from the Kantian idea of disinterestedness, functions as the corollary to 'that dangerous old conceptual fable, which has posited a "pure willless, painless, atemporal subject of cognition"' (KSA 5 p. 365). Here we see Nietzsche confirming the genealogy of *l'art pour l'art* I sketched above, seeing it as a descendant of the Kantian conception of the disinterested aesthetic subject. Naturally, Nietzsche's understanding of selfhood rules out accepting either the Kantian aesthetic subject or the derivative notion of artistic autonomy. His grounding of all acts of cognition or interpretation in will

to power and the perspectivism of human physiology cannot permit the formulation of aesthetic experience on Kantian lines. The physiology of art plays a crucial function in this regard, for it serves to bind the notion of art, artistic creativity and aesthetic experience firmly to desire and willing. In other words, the relation between art and will to power, which in the middle works is left for the reader to construct, is made explicit in his mature thinking through their common grounding in the physiological.

The notebooks of 1887 and 1888, together with late works such as *Twilight of the Idols* and the essays on Wagner are abundant with references to beauty as a purely physiological phenomenon: the pleasure in beautiful objects is a sexual pleasure, artistic creativity is a process of procreation, 'all art . . . inflames desire' (KSA 13: 14 [119] p. 296), 'Art reminds us of states of animal vigour; on the one hand it is an excess and outflow of blooming corporeality into the world of pictures and desires; on the other a stimulation of animal functions through pictures of and desire for heightened life' (KSA 12: 9 [102] p. 394). However the link to will to power only becomes transparent if we recall that the notion of interpretative will to power is not limited in Nietzsche to the activity of just human subjects attempting to construct a meaningful environment within which to live, indeed within which living is rendered possible.

We have already observed how Nietzsche seeks to outline the extent to which 'knowing' (i.e. interpreting) is shaped by the organic processes of the body. As Nietzsche says, 'It seems to me that what is generally attributed to the mind characterises the being of the organic: and in the highest functions of the mind I find merely a sublime type of organic function' (KSA 11: 25 [356] p. 106). Additionally, however, interpretative will to power can be seen, for Nietzsche, to be functioning at even the lowest level of organic life. As early as the first volume of *Human All-too Human* (§ 18) Nietzsche discusses the manner in which the plant interprets its environment in order to enhance its own life (KSA 2 p. 39). As I have demonstrated before, Nietzsche views conscious interpretation as a merely a sophisticated variety of this basic organic interpretative will to power. Organisms, no matter how primitive, organise their environment, such that Nietzsche can claim that 'propagation amongst amoebae seems to be throwing off ballast, a pure advantage. The excretion of useless material' (KSA 12: 10 [13] p. 461).

On the basis of such an understanding of the organic as always-already interpreting, organising in order to further will to power, it is clear that art, as a physiological activity, must also be motivated not just by desire, but rather by interpretative desire for power. The beautiful is, quite simply, that which enhances the feeling of power, as that which best interprets and organises the world. In a note from early 1887, Nietzsche writes '“Beauty” is for the artist something outside all

orders of rank, because in beauty opposites are tamed; the highest sign of power, namely power over opposites; moreover, without tension: - that violence is no longer needed; that everything follows, obeys, so easily and so pleasantly - that is what delights the artist's will to power' (KSA 12: 7 [3] p. 258). Here we find cashed out in concrete terms *how* it is that the beautiful promotes, or delights will to power. It is because the beautiful represents a supreme act of organisation and control over its elements, an act of mastery driven by will to mastery. Hence the meaning of Nietzsche's remarks on 'The artwork, where it appears without artist, e.g. as body, as organisation (Prussian officer corps, Jesuit order)' (KSA 12: 2 [114] p. 118) becomes much clearer. The organisational perfection of both of these bodies inspires the goal of the interpretative process to gain ever increasing control over and organisation of its environment.

Nietzsche's understanding of beauty as an exemplification of interpretative will to power almost inevitably leads to a preference for classical taste, which we see in Nietzsche's so called 'Dionysian Classicism', and in his antipathy towards Romanticism. For Romanticism is characterised in Nietzsche's eyes by a lack of organisation and discipline; it is a product of feeble spirits unable to exercise control over either themselves or their material, whereas the Classical (and by this Nietzsche frequently means the neo-Classicism of Poussin or of the eighteenth century rather than just Classical Antiquity) is the product of a strong organisational drive.²²

As early as the second volume of *Human All-too Human* Nietzsche makes a distinction between Classicism and Romanticism with the idea of strength as a distinguishing criterion when he writes that 'Both classically and romantically minded spirits . . . contemplate a vision of the future: but the former do it on the basis of the strengths of their time, and the latter on the basis of its weakness' (KSA 2 p. 652).

In the fifth book of *The Gay Science* (§ 370) Nietzsche offers a fuller distinction between an active and a reactive creative principle, once again on the basis of whether an enfeebled reactive desire for absolution motivates the artistic drive, or whether it is instead animated by an active superabundant power. Nietzsche claims, 'Every art, every philosophy can be seen as a means to healing and help in the service of growing, struggling, life: they always presuppose suffering and sufferers. Yet there are two kinds of sufferers, on the one hand those who suffer from superabundance of life . . . and on the other those who suffer from an impoverishment of life . . . who seek peace, calm . . . redemption from themselves through art' (KSA 3 p. 621). Art can serve as a means to revenge against life, and hence the mimesis of suffering only goes towards strengthening Romantic pessimism, but it can also represent suffering in order to overcome it, subsequently to affirm suffer-

ing and the world in general, as is the case with Greek tragedy. Hence the artistic representation of suffering is an ambivalent praxis, which, like Nihilism, can be employed in both an active and reactive sense. As active it can be the work of 'the forward striving spirit' (KSA 12: 9 [166] p. 434), where will to power interprets and gathers up ever more, where 'opposites are tamed', and yet where the contingent nature of that interpretation is recognised and in addition celebrated. As reactive it can be the product of the 'disinherited' spirit, whose faith in the 'tree of knowledge' (KSA 5 p. 99) has been shattered, yet refuses to face up to the task of accepting responsibility for the creation of new values, either clinging to a residual faith in the notion of an autonomous, objective truth to the world, or seeking to annihilate all values. In these responses art is used either to confirm the belief in an objective 'order of things', and as Vattimo notes²³ we can observe this process at work in the mid-nineteenth century fascination with popular poetry, or as a means to transcend, and ultimately escape from, the terrifying abyss of nothingness.

In his later notes from 1887, Nietzsche explicitly equates the difference between active and reactive with the difference between the Classical and Romantic styles, with, once again, the function of will to power as organisation acting as the criterion for distinguishing the two. In a note from Autumn 1887 he asks whether 'the opposition between active and reactive does not lie hidden behind the opposition of Classical and Romantic' (KSA 12: 9 [112] p. 400), and in a later note entitled 'Aesthetica' from the same notebook he writes 'In order to be Classical one must possess *all* the strong, apparently contradictory gifts and desires: but such that they go together beneath the one yoke' (KSA 12: 9 [166] p. 433). In contrast one of Nietzsche's main criticisms of Romanticism in his symptomatological analysis of Modernity, is its lack of organising power. In Romanticism he observes 'the will to unity . . . but the inability to let it exercise tyranny in the most important thing, namely with regard to the work itself' (KSA 13: 11 [312] p. 132), and it is a criticism which Nietzsche repeats in his attacks on Wagner in *The Case of Wagner* diagnosing the latter's music as an 'anarchy of atoms . . . hostility and chaos' (KSA 6 p. 27), adding later in the second postscript that Wagner displays 'the decline of organisational power' (ibid. p. 47). In other words, Romanticism is a sign of enfeebled will to power.

Nietzsche's physiological critique of Kantian disinterestedness may be flawed inasmuch as it addresses issues which are not to be found in the text of Kant himself, but its significance lies in laying the groundwork for his own attempt to locate art firmly within the network of interests which go to characterise organic life's engagement with the world. As Nietzsche says, 'At bottom, Man reflects himself in things, he considers everything to be beautiful that throws back his own image' (KSA 6 p. 123).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the question of the physiological in Nietzsche's work as it relates to the themes of immanence, transcendence and the aesthetic. As such Nietzsche's turn to the physiological accomplishes a number of tasks. First it serves to further his general offensive against the metaphysical orientation towards transcendence by grounding cognitive and evaluative processes in the physiology of the human organism. This is not to imply that Nietzsche supports some form of organicist thinking, but rather to argue that he is using the metaphor of physiology to undercut the idea of a subjective existence outside the constraints of the body. Interpretation is not reducible to the body, but neither is it possible without the body and hence Nietzsche is moving ever further from the metaphysics of the sublime which suggest just that possibility.

Second Nietzsche is using the biological to understanding aesthetic experience, a move which challenges the tradition from Kant onwards of the disinterested aesthetic subject. As I have suggested, Nietzsche's primary target in this regard is not necessarily Kant per se, but rather the contemporary doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*. The importance of choosing this doctrine for censure will become apparent in my final chapter, where I shall be showing how for Nietzsche *l'art pour l'art* has permitted art to be relegated to the margins of modern society, precisely through its belief in the irrelevance of art to anything beyond itself. Nietzsche's physiology of aesthetic experience also works against a metaphysical understanding of aesthetic rapture as a moment of transcendence. In other words the initial position of *The Birth of Tragedy*, which constitutes a response to the sublime, is becoming modified through the altered understanding of the meaning of rapture. In that early work the sentiment of Idealism is still powerful, with all its attendant metaphysical connotations. Having recognised this weakness in his earlier writing Nietzsche is trying to reformulate an understanding of art which will make it a meaningful practice (i.e. one which evade the vacuous play of aesthetic Modernism), yet one which will not become assimilable to the Idealist or Romantic interpretation of art as offering a moment of self-transcendence.

Notes;

¹ In ¶ 69 of *Being and Time* which is concerned with the problem of transcendence, Heidegger constantly describes concerned being-in-the-world as attending to Dasein's 'whither' [Wohin] (e.g., p. 416), its relation of 'towards-which' [Wozu] (e.g., p. 415), and the structure of care as constituted by 'Being-alongside' [Sein bei] (e.g., p. 404), all of which use spatial metaphors.

Most obvious of all, though, is Heidegger's insistence on the 'There' [Da] of Dasein, which in his later works will become the clearing of Being's self-disclosure.

² E. Blondel, *Nietzsche the body and culture*, trans. Sean Hand (London: Athlone Press 1991)

³ See *Ecce Homo* 'Why I am so clever' § 2, *Gay Science* §§ 59, 306, 367, or notes from the *Nachlaß* such as KSA 13: 14 [174] p. 360-1.

⁴ See, too, Blondel's criticism of certain post-structuralist readings of Nietzsche 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Sprache für das Verständnis Nietzsches: Nietzsche und der französische Strukturalismus', *Nietzsche-Studien* 10 / 11 (1981-2).

⁵ On Nietzsche's relation to Lange see George Stack, *Nietzsche and Lange* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1983).

⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, op. cit., Vol. 2 p. 284.

⁷ See his essay 'Nihilism: "Thus Speaks Physiology"' in Tom Darby, Béla Egyed & Ben Jones (eds.) *Nietzsche and the Rhetoric of Nihilism* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press 1989), n. 4.

⁸ Richard Schacht, 'Nietzsche's Gay Science. Or, How to Naturalise Cheerfully' in Robert Solomon (ed.), *Reading Nietzsche* (New York: Oxford University Press 1988)

⁹ In using the word 'Romantic' as applicable to Wagner, Nietzsche is not necessarily using it as a historical-descriptive term as is the practice in contemporary cultural history. Rather it is used as the basis of a typology of culture, with its complement in the 'Classical'. Neither term should be seen as historically specific. For a full analysis of Nietzsche's understanding of Romantik see Elrud Kunne-Ibsch, *Die Stellung Nietzsches in der Entwicklung der modernen Literaturwissenschaft* (Utrecht: Van Gorcum & Comp. N.V. 1972).

¹⁰ Michel Haar, 'Heidegger and the Nietzschean "Physiology of Art"' in David Krell & David Wood (eds.), *Exceedingly Nietzsche. Aspects of Contemporary Nietzsche Interpretation*.

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*. Vol. I. 'The Will to Power as Art', trans. David Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991) p. 96. All subsequent page references will be in the text.

¹² On the notion of 'Stimmung' in Heidegger, and its importance for the notion of letting-be [Sein-lassen], see Michel Haar, 'La Pensée et le Moi chez Heidegger: les dons et les épreuves de l'Etre' in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 80 (1975). For a more general account of Heidegger's assimilation of Nietzsche's thinking to the question of Being see Fawzia Assaad-Mikhail, 'Heidegger interprète de Nietzsche', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* lxxiii (1968) who concludes (p. 29) that 'In short it is a case, for Heidegger, of inventing with Nietzsche a philosophy of Being that would express exactly what he, Heidegger, says: of uncovering, amongst those texts which are concerned with Being, implications of a Heideggerian character and of introducing Being as the principle of a valid interpretation of the thought of Nietzsche.'

¹³ See, for example, Heidegger's comment that 'By having a feeling for beauty the subject has already come out of himself; he is no longer subjective, no longer a subject,' op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁴ See Heidegger, *Nietzsche*. Vol I § 15, 'Kant's Doctrine of the Beautiful. Its Misinterpretation by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.'

¹⁵See Mihailo Djuric, *Nietzsche und die Metaphysik*, pp. 209 - 222 and Urs Heftrich, 'Nietzsches Auseinandersetzung mit der "Kritik der Ästhetischen Urteilskraft"', *Nietzsche Studien* 20 (1991).

¹⁶Ernst Behler has recently suggested that Nietzsche entertains both a concept of art as play, symbolised in the ideas of *l'art pour l'art*, and also one of art as a life-enhancing practice. I shall be arguing, however, that this sense of play in art, which Nietzsche sees in the artist's willingness to play with truth, is far from the ideas of *l'art pour l'art*. Art-as-play in Nietzsche is not necessarily opposed to the idea of art-as-will to power, but rather complements it, as part of the interpretative process. See Behler, *Derrida - Nietzsche, Nietzsche - Derrida* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1988) p. 100 ff.

¹⁷Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* § 5

¹⁸Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-believe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1990).

¹⁹Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. M. Shaw (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). For a good general account of the Romantics' reception of Kant's aesthetics, and in particular his exposition of the four modalities of the aesthetic experience, see Manfred Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989), especially lectures 4 - 9.

²⁰That Nietzsche was acquainted with the work of Hanslick and Gautier is evident from the fact that he refers to them several times in his notes. For his comments on Hanslick see KSA 7: 9 [8] p. 273; 9 [98] p. 310; 19 [259] p. 501 and KSA 8: 5 [134] p. 74. For Gautier, KSA 11: 25 [125] p. 46; KSA 12: 7 [7] p. 288 and KSA 13: 11 [296] p. 121; 23 [2] p. 600. His interest in Hanslick in the early 1870's derives from his interest at that time in music, whereas his comments on Gautier are much more set within the context of French literary and artistic culture.

²¹Heinz-Peter Pütz, *Kunst und Künstlerexistenz bei Nietzsche und Thomas Mann* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1963) p. 15-16.

²²It is important to take note of Ernst Behler's observations in his 'Nietzsche und die Frühromantische Schule', *Nietzsche Studien* 7 (1978), that Nietzsche's concept of Romanticism is on the whole limited to the 'late' Romanticism of mid-19th century France, the primary figure being Victor Hugo, rather than the work of the early Romantics in Germany.

²³See Gianni Vattimo, 'Nihilism: Reactive and Active' in Tom Darby, Béla Egyed & Ben Jones (eds.), *op. cit.*

The Raging Discordance of Art and Truth

In the previous chapter I outlined how Nietzsche uses the vocabulary of physiology to engage on a sustained against the aesthetic Modernism of *l'art pour l'art* and the metaphysical structure of thinking which supports it. As such, this physiology of art functions as a complement to the rethinking of time under the sign of Eternal Recurrence which I discussed in the fifth chapter. Both Eternal Recurrence and the turn to physiology constitute the central weapons in Nietzsche's critique of the transcendence of metaphysics and in both lines of criticism art appears to be the cultural phenomenon where the anti-metaphysical occurs to a heightened degree. In the turn to the physiology of art we see Nietzsche undertaking something which has previously not been a feature of his writing on art. Namely a critique of the aesthetic tradition. When I note this has not occurred previously I am not indicating that there at some time in his career a shift in thinking, but simply that the themes I have hitherto treated have not involved an explicit critique of inherited modes of thinking about art. Indeed both the thematics of *The Birth of Tragedy* and those of artistic meaning and temporality I discussed relied heavily on elements of Kant's *Critique of Judgement*.

If Nietzsche is to use art as a palliative to the theoretical culture of Modernity, however, it will not be sufficient to merely point out potentialities within the work which undermine the dominant metaphysical régime of truth. For as we have seen in the case of *The Birth of Tragedy* art can nevertheless be assimilated to the inherited discourse, as Nietzsche discovered with Wagner. To give support to his argument Nietzsche has to criticise the inherited aesthetic discourse, in order to free art from its 'misappropriation' (and denigration) by theoretical culture. Once old pre-conceptions are abolished, then the significance of Nietzsche's writing on art will become clearer. We have seen this process of criticism at work in the last chapter, where Nietzsche's turn to physiology facilitates a critique of the understanding of aesthetic judgement which has permitted art to become a trivial pastime, rather than the central cultural activity Nietzsche intends it to be.

The notion of disinterestedness, however, only constitutes one of the key misunderstandings of art for Nietzsche. In this chapter I shall discuss two other central themes which it is necessary for Nietzsche to criticise in order for his project of aesthetic cultural renewal to be credible. In particular Nietzsche sets out to criticise the idea, first, that art can be equated with the truth, whether the truth of the infinite, as the Romantics contend, or the truth of the objective empirical world, as

maintained by the Realists. Second Nietzsche criticises the traditional idea that the essential aspect of the aesthetic experience revolve around the spectator's (or listener's) response to the beautiful object, whether it be the beautiful object of nature or the finished work of art. Both themes can be traced back to Kant, and hence Nietzsche's critique of them follows on from his critique of the notion of disinterestedness and of the ideas which grew out of that notion. I shall deal with each theme in turn.

The Truth of Art

In a note from 1886, Nietzsche makes the following comment concerning patterns of thinking in aesthetics hitherto:

'NB

- 1) Attempt to bring Aesthetics closer to unegoistic Ethics (as a preparation for it) through the elimination of the "I".
- 2) Attempt to bring it closer to knowledge (pure subject, "pure reflection of the object")
 - against this: the object, when viewed aesthetically, falsified through and through
 - "pure, willless, painless timeless subject of knowing"
 - by no means "knowledge" !'

(KSA 12: 5[99] p. 226)

As Urs Heftrich notes¹ the evident object of Nietzsche's criticism here is Schopenhauer's interpretation of Kant. The notion of disinterestedness, which in Kant, though a prerequisite of any aesthetic judgement, laid no claim to a truth content, has become in Schopenhauer a means to overcome the limitations of the principle of sufficient reason. In other words, willless aesthetic contemplation offers a disclosure of the noumenal reality of the world, which is beyond the reach of everyday, rational cognition. Schopenhauer has thus overturned the Platonic order of things, where art becomes the mere mimesis of the material world, itself a poor copy of the true world of the forms, in short where art somehow covers up the truth.

Accomplishing this reversal, Schopenhauer thus goes much further than Kant was prepared to in delineating the capacities and limits of aesthetic judgement. Admittedly Kant does see the beautiful as a symbol of the good, and the semantic indeterminacy of the aesthetic object does allow the Imagination unrestricted freedom. Admittedly, too, Kant does insist that the judgement of taste, though subjective, is also universal, thereby creating a parallelism between knowing and judging. However these assertions are far less ambitious than the claims made on behalf of aesthetic judgement by Schopenhauer. Moreover Schopenhauer was not the only thinker to employ themes from Kant's *Critique of Judgement* in order to make

much grander claims for art. The early German Romantics, for example, and Schelling and Hölderlin in particular, transform Kant's idea that the aesthetic experience is conceptually indeterminate into a claim that the Absolute reveals itself in the Beautiful, which, once again transcends the limitations of conceptual thinking. Finding inspiration in a different aspect of the Kantian system, the Romantics thus reach a conclusion similar to Schopenhauer as to the cognitive capacities of aesthetic experience and, ultimately, of works of art.

This (mis-)reading of Kant's aesthetics is not, however, merely limited to the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Heidegger too, though he points out the shortcomings of Schopenhauer's understanding of Kant, then interprets Kant as arguing that the Beautiful is, in some sense, world-disclosive. In *The Will to Power as Art* he writes: 'in order to find something beautiful, we must let what encounters us, purely as it is itself, come before us in its own statue and worth Comportment toward the beautiful as such, says Kant, is *unconstrained favouring* We must release what encounters us as such to its way to be; we must allow and grant it what belongs to it and what it brings to us.'² It is a reading of Kant, which, of course, harmonises with the alethic function allotted to art in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, and distorts the Kantian text just as much as does his reading of Nietzsche. For the latter, too, the relation of art and truth are central concerns, and Heidegger is correct to recognise this in his analysis. For Nietzsche, equally, art has a higher worth than 'truth', hence his hostility to any idea that for us art is a thing of the past. Yet such superficial similarity with the Romantics should not mislead us into failing to recognise the deep and fundamental differences which separate his thinking from theirs.

If we follow Heidegger's analysis of 'the raging discord between art and truth', the difference will consist in their mutual relation toward the problem of Becoming and Being. Returning repeatedly to Nietzsche's comment that 'to stamp Becoming with the mark of Being - that is the supreme will to power' (KSA 12: 7[54] p. 312), Heidegger characterises Nietzsche's understanding of truth as a function of the desire for permanence. As such Heidegger notes, 'truth is any given fixed apparition that allows life to rest firmly on a particular perspective and to preserve itself. as such fixation, "truth" is an immobilising of life, and hence its inhibition and dissolution' (*Nietzsche* I p. 216). In contrast art allows the real (i.e. Becoming) to reveal itself as Becoming, without being fixed in one perspective. Heidegger writes, 'in order for the real to *remain* real, it must on the other hand simultaneously transfigure itself by going out beyond itself, surpassing itself in the scintillation of what is created in art' (ibid., p. 217). In other words, art is a dynamic process of constant self-overcoming which thereby reveals the 'reality' of the world, namely Becoming.

Heidegger's interpretation is persuasive because it provides a framework which will accommodate both his later analysis of Eternal Return and also creates a parallel between the artist and the constantly self-renewing *Übermensch*, a parallel which, of course, Nietzsche himself frequently draws. However, there are serious grounds for faulting Heidegger's reading, grounds which relate to the manner in which Nietzsche's thinking can be considered to surpass the fundamental ontology of the former.

In his analysis of the notion of 'truth' in Nietzsche, Heidegger seems to be imputing to Nietzsche *two* notions of truth. The first, which we can term 'truth', is the idea of truth as the product of a particular, human, perspective. It is that particular 'falsehood' without which (human) life would not be possible. The second, undeclared notion, which I shall capitalise as 'Truth', assumes there to be a higher, objective reality, transcending the limitations of any particular perspective. In Heidegger's reading, Nietzsche regards art as worth more than 'truth' because it reveals the higher 'Truth' of reality, namely Becoming as the foundation of the world.

According to Heidegger's reading, Nietzsche views art as world-disclosive in a manner similar to Schopenhauer and the Romantics, and, in anticipation of *The Origin of the Work of Art*, is not limited to the fixed representation of mere beings seen from a particular perspective. Yet an awareness of Nietzsche's anti-foundationalism makes such a reading highly improbable. 'Truth' simply cannot have any place in Nietzsche's project as I have outlined it, except as a target for polemic. As we have seen, Nietzsche's polemic has two kinds of misunderstanding as its target. The first misunderstanding is when 'truth' is taken to be identical to 'Truth', and, broadly speaking, it is the Realist assumptions of the sciences together with that brand of 'dogmatic' metaphysics that even Kant had criticised, which make this mistake. The second misconception arises when 'truth' is accepted to be a peculiarly human construct, but yet is seen as nevertheless concealing the higher 'Truth', and Nietzsche's target in this regard is the dualism of Kant and the Idealists. Heidegger is attempting to assimilate Nietzsche's thinking to this view, despite Nietzsche's objection to any such form of dualist thinking.³

At first sight it might seem plausible to read *The Birth of Tragedy* as supporting such dualist tendencies, with its appropriation of Kantian and Schopenhauerian vocabulary. However as I have pointed out, there are also strong reasons for emphasising the thematic *continuity* between Nietzsche's early and later work, rather than neatly dividing his work into distinct 'periods'. Though we should be aware of the pitfalls in referring to authorial intention, Nietzsche's retrospective comments about that early work do seem to confirm its affinity with his later writings.

If we turn to Nietzsche's other writings which concern art, we find none of the ambiguities which inhere in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The pages of both volumes of *Human All-too Human* are littered with aphorisms which strive to dissociate art from truth. Moreover Nietzsche is not attempting to pit art against 'truth' in the name of some higher, transcendent 'Truth'. Rather, he seeks to avoid any and every suggestion that art discloses some prior state of affairs, whether it be imagined to be the merely empirical world or a noumenal world usually concealed by the limiting categories of conceptual thinking.

The section of *Human All-too Human* entitled 'From the soul of artists and authors' contains a number of aphorisms which argue against any mimetic view of art. Instead, Nietzsche argues, we should recognise the importance of play, fantasy, and of simple deception in understanding art. In § 146, entitled 'The artist's sense of truth', Nietzsche writes 'The artist has, with regard to the cognition of truths, a weaker ethic than the thinker . . . he . . . considers the continuation of his style of creation more important than scientific devotion to the true, in any form' (KSA 2 p. 142). In § 154 he writes of artists that 'They do not deceive themselves, yet they intentionally surround life with a game of lies. Simonides advised his compatriots to treat life as a game' (ibid. p. 146).

At this point one might object that the conscious intent of the artist says nothing about the objective significance of the work of art itself, yet here, too, Nietzsche is keen to stress that art does not merely reproduce a given reality. In the same section he concludes that 'Art renders the sight of life bearable by laying over it the veil of impure thinking' (ibid. p. 144), a conclusion which not only repeats the understanding of tragedy in *The Birth of Tragedy* but modifies it by explicitly equating such 'rendering bearable' with 'falsifying'. Far from disclosing any form of truth, art functions precisely through its capacity to deceive, such that we learn 'to look upon life in every shape and form with interest and desire, to carry our feelings so far that we finally exclaim "however it is, life is good"' (ibid. p. 185). It is a conviction which Nietzsche retains, arguing for it many times over, starting with the second volume of *Human All-too Human*, where he writes of 'The Muses as Liars. - "We are excellent at telling many lies" - thus sang the Muses once, when they revealed themselves to Hesiod. - Grasping the artist as a deceiver leads to essential discoveries' (ibid. p. 462). It is moreover this awareness of the deceptive nature of art which leads the Greeks, the last truly aesthetic culture in Nietzsche's eyes, to admire Odysseus' 'ability to tell lies' (KSA 3 p. 224). 'The poet sees in the liar his foster brother [lit. "milk-brother"]' writes Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* 'whose milk he has drunk' (ibid. p. 510).

With this emphasis on the mendacity of all artistic practice Nietzsche is paradoxically employing a philosopheme, the ancestry of which is well known. He

is not, however, criticising the Romantic and Idealist belief in the truthfulness of art in order to reinstate some Platonic distinction between the true and its copy. His critique of metaphysics cannot allow such an idea to enter into the game. Hence his use of the Platonic notion of art as a form of lie does not serve to discredit art, but rather to add weight to his general argument which brings into question the belief in truth per se. Art is not mendacious because of some deficiency in art, but because there is no truth of which it could be the mimesis.

Given Nietzsche's frequent assertion that art is a form of lie, a claim which serves primarily as a rhetorical device to aggravate the raging discord between art and the truth, it is clear that he will have no time for either Idealist theories of tragedy or for the positivist pretensions of Realism. It is significant that in his middle works, supposedly sympathetic to a positivist understanding of truth, Nietzsche is critical of the Realist movement in the arts, which would function as an artistic analogue to the scientific positivism of the nineteenth century. Amongst the verses of 'Jest, Cunning and Revenge' preceding the main text of *The Gay Science* he writes the following;

'The realistic painter

"Nature is true and complete !" - How does he begin:

When would Nature ever be represented in his picture ?

Infinite is the smallest portion of the world ! -

In the end he paints of it what he likes.

And what does he like ? Whatever he can paint !'

(ibid. p. 365)

On the basis of this rather charmless verse alone, we can observe that Nietzsche's work of the so-called middle period consists of more than a mere overturning of the super-sensualism of Plato into a purely sensualist Positivism. For not only is Nietzsche challenging the idea that nature can simply be 'reproduced' in its entirety through art, he is also challenging the idea of nature as a simple given. Referring implicitly to Perspectivism, nature is instead seen as an infinity, which cannot be depicted as an empirical totality. It is a criticism we see repeated in notes from 1884, where the object this time is Flaubert and photography. Here Nietzsche observes that 'The "will-to-be-objective" e.g. in Flaubert is a modern misunderstanding . . . Gentlemen, there is no "thing-in-itself" ! What they achieve is scientism or photography, i.e. description without perspective, a type of Chinese painting, pure foreground and everything full to bursting' (KSA 11: 25 [164] p. 57). The attempt at self-transcendence on the part of the Realist author or painter is, quite simply, a delusion. The desire by the author to efface himself, to submerge himself completely in the objective world being described is to ignore the

role of the author in constituting that world, in having access to only certain perspectives on the world and not others. In describing *that* world and not another. As if continuing his criticism of the same delusion, Nietzsche writes some three years later, 'It is not possible to remain *objective* or to suspend the interpretative, additive, supplementing, poetising power (- which latter forges the chain that affirms the Beautiful)' (KSA 12: 10 [167] p. 555).

Clearly, when Nietzsche later comes to claim, in *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, that 'Aesthetics is indeed nothing but applied physiology' (KSA 6 p. 418), and to argue in a note from 1887 that 'The desire for art and beauty is an indirect desire for the ecstasies of the sexual drive, which it communicates to the cerebrum' (KSA 12: 8 [1] pp. 325-6), he is consolidating on his earlier goal of driving a wedge between art and any notion of revealed truth. By describing art in terms of physiology, Nietzsche is bringing it within the broader compass of his project of immanence, a wider strategy which embraces both Nietzsche's physiologically based perspectivism and his doctrine of Eternal Return.

Art 'discloses' neither the truth of the sensuous world nor that of some supersensuous realm. In fact it 'discloses' nothing at all. Art *creates* a world. It carries out a selective, world-constitutive, operation in a manner analogous to the interpretative process of will to power, an insight which causes Nietzsche to speak of the 'states in which we plant ["legen" - the root of the verb "hineinlegen" which Nietzsche employs to describe the process of scientific 'discovery'] a transfiguration and plenitude into things . . . until they reflect back our own plenitude and joy in life' (KSA 12: 9 [102] p. 393). Beauty and art are less a matter of truth than one of strength. As Nietzsche says, 'It is a question of power (of an individual or of a people), *whether* and *where* [the] judgement "beautiful" is given . . . the feeling of power even passes the judgement "beautiful" on things and states of affairs which the impotent instinct can only estimate as being hateful, as "ugly" ' (KSA 12: 10 [168] pp. 555-6). With this assertion of the unity of the question of art and that of power we see, too, the unity of Nietzsche's critique of disinterestedness in the name of physiology, and the critique of artistic truth in the name of lying. For both features reveal the status of art as a form of interpretative will to power.

Giving Room to the Artist

In the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche remarks of Kant that 'like all philosophers, instead of gauging the aesthetic problem on the basis of the experience of the artist (the creator) [he] pondered art and the Beautiful solely from the point of view of the spectator, and thereby imperceptibly let the "spectator" into the concept "beautiful" itself' (KSA 5 p. 346).

Nietzsche is here making two, not unrelated, claims. The first is that Kant neglects the artist. The second is that consequently questions of 'beauty', 'sublimity', even 'ugliness' only have meaning when related to a passive, contemplative viewer, listener, reader and so forth. As interpretations of Kant the first is partially incorrect, while the second is partially correct.

As regards the first criticism, Nietzsche displays either neglect or sloppy reading of the extensive passages of the *Critique of Judgement* which Kant devotes to the creativity of the artist⁴. If his criticism is simply that Kant's talk of 'Genius' merely perpetuates the cult of genius, a concept, which Gadamer, too, contends is 'basically conceived from the position of the spectator,'⁵ then he is incorrect here as well. Far from submitting to the contemporary cult of the genius inherited from the "Sturm und Drang" movement of the 1770's and 80's, Kant is rather attempting to counterbalance such wild notions by stressing the extent to which creative genius (which he prefers to term merely a "talent") is guided by technique and rules of artistic production, hence his disdain for what he terms 'original nonsense', in other words artistic creativity which is determined solely by the inner subjective feeling of the artist.⁶

As regards the second criticism, Nietzsche is partially correct when he sees the Kantian spectator as the determining ground of any judgement of Beauty. I say *partially* correct because Kant resists any conclusion that taste is *just* a matter of subjective preferences through his recourse to the notion of subjective universality, and in addition suggests that certain kinds of formal, objective qualities, e.g. parergonal ornamentation, may be inappropriate objects of any judgement of taste. Furthermore Nietzsche is only partially correct since the "subjectification" of Aesthetics in Kant does not occur "imperceptibly" ["unvermerkt"] but quite consciously, since it occupies a central place in the architectonics of the Critical project.

Having defended Kant against these criticisms we must turn to a more fundamental issue: namely, why does Nietzsche consider the "subjective turn" in Kant's aesthetic theory remiss? What is the virtue of an aesthetic of the artist over and against the womanly aesthetics ["Weibs-Aesthetik"] of the spectator, of the recipient? Nietzsche writes that we 'should not demand of the artist who gives, that he become a woman - that he "receives" ' (KSA 13: 14 [170] p. 357). Yet why should we be interested in the artist in any case?

The answer to the question cannot be seen as an attempt on the part of Nietzsche to counteract an imbalance of perspectives in Kant, for in practice Nietzsche devotes considerable space and time to arguing for the constitutive role of the spectator in the determination of the Beautiful. Without being reducible to the Kantian 'subjectivist' aesthetic, Nietzsche's physiology of beauty does present many parallels with Kant's account of aesthetic judgement. Hence we shall run into

difficulties if we allow an answer to the question to be based around the issue of the putative one-sidedness of Kant's thinking.

If we change the way in which the issue is examined, however, we may offer a more adequate answer to the initial question. For I would argue that Nietzsche's dissatisfaction with the 'womanly aesthetics' practised hitherto is not guided by an objection to the orientation of aesthetics per se, but rather is connected to the way in which such a 'passive' aesthetics serves to fortify the delusory belief in art as a world-disclosive praxis.

Although it has been demonstrated that Kant does devote attention to the genesis of the work of art, one must also concede that Nietzsche is correct when he asserts that the *experience* of the artist is neglected. Kant devotes adequate space to discussing the artist's use of rules and precedents, yet the account of aesthetic experience itself is discussed exclusively with reference to the reaction of the spectator to the finished aesthetic object, whether it be an object of nature or product of human artifice. In other words, the cognitive 'quickenings' which is the central element of aesthetic experience is induced by the finished aesthetic object that, in the case of art, presents the world in a certain way.

Hence in the cases of the beautiful as the symbol of morality in Kant, poetry as the symbol of the Absolute in Romanticism, or music as the unmediated image of the Will in Schopenhauer, the aesthetic object is seen as a specific *mode* of representation facilitating a cognition that exceeds the normal bounds of reason. Thus any orientation toward the experience of the spectator cannot but help tend to view beauty as a form of revelation or disclosure, a doctrine which diverges considerably from Nietzsche's own understanding of the understanding of the aesthetic. As I have already indicated, it would naturally be absurd to suggest that Nietzsche denies the power of the aesthetic object over the spectator. Like Kant he emphasises the 'quickenings' effect of such experience (though it is more physiological than cognitive) claiming, for example, that art 'works tonically, increases strength, inflames desire' (KSA 13: 14 [119] p. 296). In *Human All-too Human* he describes the manner in which art brings about a restructuring of experience, claiming that it aims 'to alter one's sensibilities, partly by modifying our judgements on our experiences . . . partly by arousing a desire for pain, for emotion in general' (KSA 2 p. 106). However, Nietzsche nevertheless attaches more importance to the analysis of the artist's experience for two important reasons.

First, unlike Kant, Nietzsche tends to equate Aesthetics with the philosophy of *art* rather than beauty. The aesthetic object becomes the work of art, and Nietzsche is less interested in the finished artwork than in the way it functions as a sign or symptom of varying attitudes towards the world. Art is conceived of pri-

marily as an *activity* rather than as an assembly of objects which can be collectively termed 'works' of art.

In making such a claim I am not pretending that Nietzsche ceases to refer to works of art, or asserting that he denies their existence as objects. Such a claim would be absurd since he discusses individual works throughout his career, from Boccaccio's 'Decameron'⁷ to Wagner's 'Parsifal'⁸ and Cervantes' 'Don Quixote'.⁹ What I am arguing, though, is that the significance of works of art lies less in the effect they have on the spectator, reader or listener qua static, finished totalities, than in their shaping of human affectivity as dynamic creations or achievements of the artist. In other words they count less as self-contained totalities (and here we see another manner in which Nietzsche departs from Kant and from Formalist aesthetics) than as the products of a particular impulse, in short, as the achievements of interpretative will to power sublimated into the aesthetic drive. As Nietzsche argues in *Human All-too human*, 'so-called art proper, that of artworks, is just an appendage' (KSA 2 p. 454).

In dealing with the definition of the term 'Kunst' in Nietzsche an added confusion occurs in Nietzsche's willingness to use the word to describe not only products of the aesthetic drive but also those objects which are institutionally defined as art, yet which Nietzsche regards as fundamentally non-aesthetic. The most obvious example is opera, which he considers to be an essentially inartistic phenomenon (cf. *The Birth of Tragedy* § 19 ff.). So too in *Human All-too human* § 220 there is a curious discussion of 'The Beyond in Art' which notes the existence of art forms which promote a sense of the transcendent, then concludes 'A stirring saga will emerge from this, that there once existed such an art, such an artistic belief' (KSA 2 p. 180). Nietzsche's conclusion thus suggests that he terms these works 'art' out of deference to common consent rather than any personal approval of their content.¹⁰

Despite this difficulty one can nevertheless argue that for Nietzsche art and the power of formal organisation which characterises the beautiful work of art count less for themselves than for their significance as exemplifications of the will to power which pervades all life processes. Hence he is trying to bridge the gap which he sees as having sprung up, separating art from life, the beautiful from the interests it serves. A gap which originates in a sundering of the interest in artistic form from the more general interest in furthering the process of life.

Second, examining the question of art from the position of the artist, with its emphasis on the process of creation, serves to lure us away from any idea of art as revealing, as disclosing a pre-existent truth and towards the recognition of art as a world-constitutive activity, a recognition that could be summed up in the words of Paul Klee that 'Art does not replicate the visible, it *makes* visible [my Italics]'.¹¹

In the later works, and especially in the unpublished notes of the late 1880's, the question of beauty and the question of art become synonymous, the numerous passages entitled 'Aesthetica' invariably turn to the issue of 'Kunst' [art]. Not because Nietzsche is succumbing to the traditional identification of art and beauty, but because he sees the activity of perceiving beauty and that of producing art as joined at root by a shared way of seeing the world. Of beauty Nietzsche writes 'In beauty man sets himself up as the measure of perfection' (KSA 6 p. 123), adding later that 'His feeling of power, his will to power, his courage, his pride - that falls with the ugly, that grows with the beautiful' (Ibid. p. 124). Of art he claims that it is a 'compulsion-to-transform to perfection' (Ibid. p. 117), claiming further that 'Man enjoys himself in art as perfection' (Ibid.).

As will to power, art represents a mode of seeing-as, of seeing the world as perfect, *as* simplified *as* organised in a certain way. It is driven by a compulsion to *transform* ['Verwandeln-müssen'] the world, and as such, Nietzsche is interested more in the figure that puts this seeing-as into artistic praxis, namely the artist himself. Now although Nietzsche can admire the artistic qualities of something as impersonal as the Jesuit order or the Prussian officer corps, it is also the case that on the whole, art is dependent in Nietzsche on a specific kind of individual. As Nietzsche says, the work of art is only the culmination of a process, and in many respect the process is more important.

So is Nietzsche claiming that the artist is merely attempting to express in material terms a pre-determined idea of the world, like the Platonic craftsman who always works with the Form of his object in mind? No, because the artist figure, important though he is, is in many respects a cipher. Nietzsche writes that 'The phenomenon "artist" is still the most transparent: - to see through it to the basic instincts of power, nature etc. Religion and morality too!' (KSA 12: 2 [130] p. 129).

Here, too, the origins of artistic creativity are located firmly within the realm of the physiological. Not necessarily because Nietzsche would deny the importance of the conscious activity of the artist, but in order to rule out any idealist notion of artistic vision and also to counteract the cult of genius, and of course more specifically the cult of *Wagner's* genius. Hence we see a link with Nietzsche's discussion of Wagner as a medical case. The 'case' of Wagner thus gains its meaning from both Nietzsche's attempt to perceive culture as a whole in terms of physiology and also from an attempt to resist any idealist, genius-oriented notions of artistic creativity.

The artistic vision, the 'making perfect' so characteristic of artistic praxis is not guided by some transcendent ideal, but rather should be seen in terms of a *transfigurative immanence* which opposes any tendency to 'desensualisation'. In a note from June or July 1885, Nietzsche writes, 'As regards the main thing I agree

more with the artists than with any philosophers hitherto: they have not lost the great track life goes along, they have loved the things "of this world" . . . it is a sign of having turned out well [Wohlgerathenheit] when one, like Goethe, clings with ever more joy and warmheartedness to "the things of the world" ' (KSA 11: 37 [12] pp. 587-8). Nietzsche's physiology of the artist thus fortifies the notion of art as being concerned with the things 'of the world' by its refusal to seek for the source of the work of art beyond the immediately apparent.

If we turn to the second aspect, namely the idea of art as world-making rather than world-disclosing, the connection with the broader framework of transfigurative immanence should be all too transparent. The combination of Nietzsche's perspectivism and his resistance to ideas of transcendence, in short, his 'immanent perspectivism' to borrow Nehamas' phrase¹², rules out both forms of world-disclosure discussed so far. His immanent *perspectivism* rules out any view of art as mimetically disclosive of the sensual world. At best one might say that it discloses a particular perspective of the world, but then one is forced to admit the work represents a choice of a certain perspective over another, which of course undermines the Realist ideal of a work completely immersed in the objective world 'as it really is'. His *immanent* perspectivism therefore compels us to rule out talk of art either as a revelation of some higher, supersensuous truth or as a reproduction of the objective visible world (as if such a thing existed)

At the same time his immanent perspectivism draws us inevitably towards a notion of art as world-making. As a perspectival practice art involves a choice, a choice of seeing the world in various ways. As a process of transfigurative immanence art forces us to conclude that since there is no 'real', determinable world to which each choice can be related, each choice represents the creation of a particular world. The physiology of art further strengthens this insight by relating the demands for any particular world to immanent needs, i.e. those of the organism, rather than to transcendent values.

There is, in addition, perhaps one final reason why Nietzsche calls for a turn to the 'masculine' aesthetics of the artist, and it is one suggested by Jacques Derrida in his book *Spurs*. For what is significant about Nietzsche's call is not just his plea for a re-orientation to the aesthetics of the artist, but also the fact that he couches it in such gender specific terms. The artist adopts, so Nietzsche has argued, a masculine standpoint of giving, whereas, by implication, that of the woman, the feminine position is one of passive acceptance. As Derrida has pointed out, Nietzsche is here 'dealing with a very old philosopheme of *production*' (p. 77), whereby masculinity has always been regarded as the productive gender against the sterility of the feminine. It is notable, too, that Nietzsche sees the relation between the sexes as based on the process of giving and taking we have seen

elucidated above, from his claim that the foundation of all love is desire for appropriation (KSA 3 pp. 386-7) to his comparison of feminine and masculine love, where the former is characterised as a desire 'to be taken, to be accepted as a possession' (ibid. p. 611) and the latter as a desire to possess; 'the woman gives herself away, the man appropriates' (ibid.).

With this move to the (masculine) aesthetics of the artist, Nietzsche is doing a number of things. First he is drawing attention to the long tradition within metaphysics of comparing the relation of certain oppositional pairs to that between the sexes. Most especially within the sphere of aesthetics not least to be taken into consideration is the eighteenth century tradition of seeing aesthetics as a feminine discipline in contrast to the masculine rigours, and also the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime along similar lines.¹³ Yet if we follow this Nietzschean thematic through, it becomes clear that the 'masculine' aesthetics of the artist is not merely an act of assimilation to the tradition, most especially because it is in the name of this new attention to 'masculine' art that he is criticising traditional aesthetics. For we must note that in the aphorism on love from *The Gay Science* quoted above, the relation between the two sexes, while still based on the paradigm of appropriation and giving, has inverted the usual relation, inasmuch as it is the woman who gives herself, and the man who receives, or even reaches out and seizes for himself, a relation repeated in *Beyond Good and Evil* where he writes that 'Man . . . has to conceive of woman as possession, as property which can be locked away' (KSA 5 p. 175). Now this inversion would not be so significant except for the fact that Nietzsche also sees women as closer to the artistic temperament than men ('woman is so artistic' [KSA 3 p. 609]), in their suspicion of truth and their tendency for dissimulation, culminating in his claim that 'From the very first nothing has been more alien, more repugnant, more hostile to woman than truth - her great art is the lie, her highest concern is appearance and beauty' (ibid. p. 171).

We have to be careful, then, in seeing Nietzsche merely as replicating the discourse of traditional aesthetics. Rather, by his deliberating playing with the inherited discourse he should be seen as bringing together, on another level, the aesthetic and the erotic, a move we have already seen previously in his claim that aesthetic and sexual pleasure are synonymous, and that 'a Raphael is unthinkable without a certain overheating of the sexual system' (KSA 13: 14 [117] p. 295). The collusion of erotics and aesthetics serves, as a strategy, to further dissociate the question of art from the metaphysical understanding of truth, which in turn will thus add force to the severance of art as Nietzsche understands it, from the idea of art as revelation of truth, either positivist or transcendent.

Second, Nietzsche's turn to the masculine aesthetic of the artist explicitly pits the artist against truthfulness inasmuch as the latter is frequently described as a

woman in Nietzsche, an observation Derrida makes. It is a further example of Nietzsche exacerbating the discord between truth and art by occasionally casting their relation in the terms of the opposition of the genders. It is an opposition which points towards a third problem, which I can only briefly discuss here.

What paradoxically unites the masculine aesthetic of the artist with the woman is their common pre-disposition to giving. Nietzsche writes that we 'should not demand of the artist who gives, that he become a woman - that he "receives" ' (KSA 13: 14 [170] p. 357). Yet as I have already suggested, he seems less concerned with the femininity of aesthetics than with its passivity, for which the woman, on this occasion, stands as a cipher, following the traditional discourse of production. It is moreover this aspect of the problem which I shall be dealing with.

As Derrida points out, Nietzsche's use of the metaphors of appropriation and donation is far from being one of pure contingency, for the metaphysical conception of truth has always been based on the paradigm of appropriation. Truth is always something to be 'attained' or 'grasped', a feature which we see most strongly in Heidegger's concern with the proper ['eigen' - derived from the old Germanic verb meaning 'to have'] in its various forms, whether it be the differentiation between authenticity [Eigentlichkeit] and inauthenticity [Uneigentlichkeit], the concern with Dasein's ownmost [eigenste] possibilities of being, or with truth as an event [Ereignis]. This notion of truth as something to be possessed, of appropriation as prior to truth, is by no means limited to Heidegger, but is rather a general feature of all metaphysical thinking, and is set off well against Nietzsche's metaphor of truth as a woman, who, hiding behind a veil of dissimulation, always resists that masculine desire to be her master and possessor. It is a desire for mastery which never be satisfied (and here we see a parallel with the inability of will to power to exhaust its possibilities) for, as Nietzsche says, 'Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists [i.e. metaphysicians], have been inexpert about women? That the gruesome earnestness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have hitherto usually approached truth were awkward and very improper means for winning over a woman for oneself?' (KSA 5 p. 11).

With this speculation Nietzsche is not merely engaging in a whimsical play, which would relate also to his claim that as spawned by the ascetic ideal, metaphysicians avoid women and the body (and that Socrates only married out of a wicked sense of irony). For he is also challenging the notion that truth is something waiting to be appropriated, a challenge which brings us back to his turn to the aesthetics of the artist as he who gives. For the artist who gives, in common with the woman who gives herself, serves to dissociate aesthetics from metaphysics by overturning the topos of appropriation and thereby of course takes us ever further

away from the notion of art as either covering up or revealing the truth. For art is closely bound up with the philosopheme of production, one which of course brings us into proximity with Nietzsche's theory of interpretation as a transformational activity.

Gary Shapiro has recently indicated the importance to Nietzsche of the topos of gift-giving¹⁴, and like Derrida, he sets it against the metaphysical model of truth as possession. However it is important to see this not as necessarily involving us in an economic metaphor of exchange and expenditure so much as in one of production and creation. It is moreover within Nietzsche's discussion of the aesthetics that, I would argue, this process occurs, and it reminds us of the central place which the question of art occupies in Nietzsche's critical assault on metaphysics. It is within the turn to the aesthetics of the artist that the various themes of appropriation, giving, woman, dissimulation, truth and creation are brought into a meaningful relation.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have continued discussing Nietzsche's critical reception of the traditional aesthetics following on from the exploration undertaken in the last chapter of the central role which the physiological (and above all the erotic) plays in Nietzsche's understanding of art. As such I have offered a reading in many respects designed to counterbalance the Heideggerian interpretation, one which has in the past been highly influential.

In this chapter I examined those two areas of conflict between Nietzsche and the 'tradition', which centre on the issues of the truth content of art and the status within aesthetics of the spectator. In both areas I have examined Nietzsche's critique of traditional ways of conceiving these themes in order to pave the way for the radical re-orientation of culture towards art which he is attempting to achieve. This re-orientation can only be properly recognised once the discourse of aesthetics has been freed from its subordination to the episteme of metaphysics. The key relation which is cast into question is the relation of art and truth, and Nietzsche's insistence on the untruthfulness of art, on the priority of the artist over the spectator, together his view of art as a physiological activity which I discussed in the previous chapter all combine to put forward the notion of art as an immanent transformational interpretative practice. It is the immanence of the interpretative practice together with its status as a transformational activity (artistic interpretation as creating rather than merely reproducing) which points towards the way in which art can communicate the play of necessity and the lawfulness of chance, and thus continue the dialectic of the contingent. It is this solution which I shall be

discussing in the final chapter, relating it to the particular problem of art and Modernity.

Notes;

¹ Urs Heftrich, 'Nietzsche's Auseinandersetzung mit der "Kritik der Urteilskraft"', *Nietzsche Studien* 10 (1991) p. 257.

² Heidegger, *Nietzsche* Vol. I, p. 109.

³ Most obviously, of course in *Twilight of the Idols*, 'How the "true world" eventually became a fable' (KSA 6 pp. 80-81).

⁴ Heftrich has made a similar point. Cf. Heftrich, op. cit., p. 259 ff.

⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag 1965) p. 88.

⁶ See especially §§ 46 and 47 of *The Critique of Judgement* on the relation of genius to rules.

⁷ KSA 7: 7 [9] p. 138

⁸ E.g. KSA 5 p. 242 ff.

⁹ "Don Quixote" is one of the most harmful of books' (KSA 8: 8 [7] p. 130).

¹⁰ Nietzsche's willingness to apply the word 'Kunst' both to what might be called authentic art and also to those trivial works of contemporary art such as opera which he considers as unaesthetic may well lie behind Behler's confusion as regards the significance attached to the notion of play in Nietzsche. As I noted in the previous chapter (n. 16) Behler ascribes to Nietzsche an attitude which would lead him to condone l'art pour l'art as a mode of understanding art. My own interpretation differs somewhat.

¹¹ 'Die Kunst gibt nicht das Sichtbare wieder, sie macht sichtbar'. Quoted in Manfred Frank, op. cit., p. 18.

¹² I am referring to the title of Alexander Nehemas' paper, 'Immanent and Transcendent Perspectivism in Nietzsche'.

¹³ See, for example, Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* or Kant's pre-critical *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* which devotes a whole section to the analogy between the relation of the sexes and that of the beautiful and the sublime.

¹⁴ Gary Shapiro, *Alcyone. Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise and Women* (New York: State University of New York, 1991)

Art contra Nihilism: Modernity and Beyond

During the course of this study I have undertaken a thematic discussion of the problem of art in Nietzsche's philosophy, all of the themes revolving around the goal of inscribing some form of normativity at the level of the immanent. This is what I have taken Nietzsche's desire to push through the paralysis of reactive Nihilism onwards the affirmative, active Nihilism to be, and in particular I have taken it to be the main function of art to facilitate this completion of Nihilism. For as we have seen, overturning reactive entails overturning the conception of what Nihilism is. In Nietzsche's work Nihilism is transformed from being a mere renunciation of all forms of understanding to a joyful embracing of the ability of the individual to create a new interpretative framework, one disburdened of the crushing weight of guilt and the demands of the moral law which so characterised the 'old law tables' of metaphysics. Implicit in this accomplishment of Nihilism is a political attitude resistant to the egalitarian demands of a pure subjectivism or relativism, which some have wanted to construe him as supporting.

Central to this accomplishment of Nihilism is the adoption of art as an attitude towards the world and its interpretation which should displace the metaphysical understanding of our environment (both natural and political) and our relation towards that environment. This has become apparent through the examination of Nietzsche's manipulation of the discourse on the sublime in his discussion of tragedy, his sexualisation of aesthetics through the physiology of art and his adoption of a temporal structure inimical to the transcendent ideals of metaphysics, a structure he sees embodied in certain aspects of authentically artistic art, such as those of fragmentariness and ambiguity.

Now hitherto in this thesis I have tended to speak of art and the question of aesthetics in a markedly unhistorical way. I have written as if Nietzsche's critical reaction to Kantian aesthetics and the subsequent tradition were in the name of some higher, timeless truth, or least interpretation. If this held true of Nietzsche's writing he would be merely replicating the Kantian discourse, positing an alternative aesthetic theory which itself made the same error as metaphysics, namely a neglect or wilful disregard of time, history and Becoming. That such a reading ill suits the author of the *Untimely Meditations*, the author, who was so sure of his own untimeliness that he looked forward to posthumous fame only, who was so sure that his time was yet to come, should be quite evident. Hence in this concluding chapter I shall be gathering up the themes I have discussed in previous chapters and shall also be qualifying them by relating them to the problem of Modernity. Since

Nietzsche's concern is with how to become an accomplished Nihilist (Vattimo's 'nichilista compiuto'), and since the crisis of Nihilism is so characteristic for him of Modernity in general, we have to ask a number of question pertaining to his critical aesthetics.

First, how does Nietzsche's own 'aesthetic turn' as one commentator has termed it¹ relate to the Modernist aesthetic turn which was already occurring in Nietzsche's own lifetime. In other words, given that Nietzsche shares with early Modernism the conviction that Modernity is the problem to be overcome through some form of aesthetic practice, how does his attitude compare to that of the Modern movement in general ? Second, given that art is part of the cure to Modernity, does Nietzsche's notion of a post-Modern aesthetics culture bear any resemblance to the set of discourses and practices which we group together as being Post-modern ? Finally we have to ask whether Nietzsche's challenge to metaphysical culture in the name of an aesthetic education actually permits us to continue talking about art without questioning the traditional boundaries separating art off from other cultural practices, a problem I have intimated earlier. As is well known, the category of the aesthetic can be traced back to its origin in the Enlightenment, where human cultural activity was divided into the discrete areas of morality, epistemology and aesthetics. If this division, so well exemplified in Kant's three Critiques, can no longer be sustained unproblematically (and Nietzsche's assault on epistemology and morality cast this into doubt) we will have to ask ourselves whether he is advocating an elision of the three, as seems to be a central feature of the Post-modern. I shall deal with each issue in turn.

Art in / against Modernity

Nietzsche's first philosophical work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, while ostensibly concerned with an analysis of ancient Athenian tragedy, is permeated with a sense of the present. In my third chapter which dealt with that book, I suggested the extent to which Nietzsche is indebted to Kantian and Romantic theories of the sublime in his account of tragic culture and the aesthetic state of rapture. However, unlike Kant, Schopenhauer and perhaps even Heidegger, Nietzsche is not interested in formulating some ahistorical theory of the sublime or of aesthetic experience in general. This can be said for two reasons.

First, the influence of Schiller, Hegel and the early Romantics on nineteenth century thinking effectively made it impossible to ignore the historical relevance of the aesthetic; the famous *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* had been conducted almost entirely on the terrain of aesthetic theory and literary criticism. Although Hegel himself was not particularly party to this dispute, his own massive

contribution to the understanding of art and the aesthetic similarly located the question of art firmly within the domain of history. His *Lectures on Aesthetics* render the notion of a timeless object of aesthetic experience and a timeless norm of beauty problematic to say the least, most especially with his startling thesis that for us art is a thing of the past. As will have become clear during the argument, however, Nietzsche's thinking about art is directed towards an overturning of this thesis, even if this remains an implicit goal only.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, Nietzsche's thinking on art in *The Birth of Tragedy* is historicised to the extent that the book is written as a specific response to the more general crisis of faith in contemporary culture for which he will later reserve the term Nihilism. If the early Romantics, and in particular Novalis, were critical of the embryonic development of industrial society and instrumental reason, Nietzsche's work is very much an attempt to articulate the feeling that this culture of scientific reason has been at last revealed *itself* as bankrupt. He comments of Goethe's *Faust* that it reveals the degree to which 'the modern person is beginning to discern the limits of that Socratic desire to know, and from the wide, barren sea of knowledge longs for the coast' (KSA 1 p. 116). *The Birth of Tragedy* thus undertakes two tasks. The first is a proto-genealogical investigation into the roots of modern scientific culture, through an examination of the rise of Socrates. Although the notion of genealogy will only be properly articulated some fifteen years later, quite clearly Nietzsche is here attempting to understand the origin of the obsessive desire in the culture of scientific reason to render everything intelligible, to leave no room for doubt. His answer is, of course, that this culture originates in Socrates' inability to accept either the ritual annihilation of the tragic hero or the fundamental sense of ambiguity and uncertainty which tragedy produces. Quite clearly this analysis remains constant throughout Nietzsche's writings, from his insistence on Plato's role as originator of the crisis of modern culture to his claim that metaphysics is merely a sublimated form of the desire of the weak for certainty and redemption, rather than facing up to the violence and uncertainty of tragic culture. In the 'Attempt at a Self-criticism' of 1886, Nietzsche confirms this, asking 'And science itself, our science - yes what does all science mean, when viewed as a symptom of life? Whither, worse still, whence - all science? What? Is scientificity just a fear of and flight from pessimism? A fine weapon against - the truth? And in moral terms something like cowardice and falsity?' (ibid. p. 12-3).

The second task of *The Birth of Tragedy* would then be to propose a form of cultural renewal, which Nietzsche mistakenly believes to be occurring in the work of Richard Wagner, and here we are reminded of Strong's claim I noted in chapter four that Nietzsche was initially attracted to Wagner because of the political

significance the latter attached to art. Once again, although he later repudiates Wagner, and eventually identifies his music with the most decadent forms of contemporary culture, his commitment to a cultural renewal remains unchanged. Moreover the basis of this renewal will be art, even in Nietzsche's later works, and is a response to the problem Nietzsche observes in *The Birth of Tragedy* that 'There has never been any period of art in which so-called education [Bildung]² and authentic [eigentlich] art stood as alienated and disinclined towards one another as we can see in the present. We understand why such a sickly education hates true art; for it fears its own downfall at the latter's hands' (ibid. p. 130-1). In other words, modern Socratic culture is built on very poor foundations indeed, and if it is confronted by a critical artistic praxis, those foundations may very easily be swept away. In this sense, then, Nietzsche can be considered to be very much part of the Modern movement (and heir to Schiller) seeking cultural enlightenment and transformation through certain forms of artistic production, although this is a claim which will need substantial qualification. Perhaps at present we should content ourselves merely by seeing Nietzsche as a Modernist inasmuch as for him Modernity presents a moment of crisis.

By drawing on those aspects of *The Birth of Tragedy* which are specifically addressed to the problem of Modernity, I am placing the question of value and evaluation at the core of Nietzsche's discussion of art, and this coheres well with the relentless polemic Nietzsche reserves for those formalists who in their efforts to free art from the trivialising morality of the 18th and 19th centuries have simply reacted against such appropriation of art, by declaring the autonomy of art in effect denuding it of any extrinsic worth.

Nietzsche repeatedly stresses the extent to which modern culture is fundamentally hostile to art and the aesthetic understanding. In *The Birth of Tragedy* the passage I earlier quoted, which criticises the lack of aesthetic sensibility currently sustained by modern 'Bildung', is confirmed by Nietzsche's recurrent attacks on opera. If we recall, opera, which Nietzsche interprets as the characteristic art form of the modern age since the Renaissance, is driven by a non-aesthetic drive. It is not simply a matter of the Apollinian displacing the Dionysian through the dominance of the text and intelligibility. Rather both Dionysian and Apollinian drives have been displaced by the Socratic desire to know, and which has put forward its claim to govern the production of all so-called works of art. His account of opera runs as follows. Opera was born out of a Socratic culture, paradoxically as the result of an attempt to rehabilitate Greek tragedy. In its combination of drama and music the work of the Florentine composers was attempting to imitate what they knew to have been the formal characteristic of Greek drama. However, because it was produced by a theoretical culture, i.e. one that

demanded 'knowledge' rather than tragic 'wisdom' the attempt was doomed to failure. As Nietzsche notes, 'Answering to the wish of the listener to understand the words being sung the singer speaks rather than sings and increases the expressive pathos of the words with this half-singing: through this increase in the pathos he facilitates the comprehension of the words and overcomes that remaining half, the music' (KSA 1 p. 121).

Hence opera presents itself as a paradoxical musical form, one whose goal is to reduce to a minimum the musical element for the sake of clarity. Yet the significance of such an artistic form is not that it merely gives priority to the intelligibility of the text at the expense of the music. The preference for the text signifies for Nietzsche an exclusion of the aesthetic per se, not just a mistaken aesthetic praxis. For 'Opera is the progeny of theoretical Man, of the critical layperson, not of the artist: one of the most alienating facts in the history of all the arts. It was the demand of truly unmusical listeners to understand the word above all' (KSA 1 p. 123).

Nietzsche's account of opera and of its concomitant displacement of the aesthetic drive becomes extended in other works to encompass a general theory of the alienation and marginalisation of art in Modernity. Amongst his earlier works perhaps one of the most striking analyses appears in section § 170 of 'The Wanderer and his Shadow' in *Human All-too human*, entitled 'Art in the Time of Work'. Here Nietzsche observes how 'We have the conscience of an industrious epoch: this does not permit us to give our best times and mornings over to art, even if this art were itself the greatest and most worthy. It counts for us as a matter of leisure, of relaxation: we dedicate the remainder of our time, our energies, to it' (KSA 2 p. 623). This trivialisation of the function of art has in turn led to a trivialisation of the content of art, for 'even the artists of great art promise relaxation, diversion, they too address themselves to the exhausted, they too ask him for the hours in the evening of the working day' (ibid. p. 624).

Set against this disenfranchisement of art the motive behind Nietzsche's polemic against formalist aesthetics becomes all the clearer. Quite simply, in attempting to free art from the trivial moralising to which it was subjected, they have merely confirmed the prevailing ideology of modern society, which has relegated art to the status of entertainment. Rather than supporting Nietzsche's insight that art 'is the great facilitator of life, the great seductress towards life, the great stimulus to life' (KSA 13: 11 [415] p. 194), they have rather managed to concur with Hegel's judgement that art has been superseded as a serious concern by other cultural formations. It is a criticism of formalism which in many respects parallels the early Marxist critique of formalist ideologies, though without sharing their commitment to class struggle or any form of liberating utopianism.

A further difference between Nietzsche and Marxist critiques of such a trivialising of art lies in the fact that overshadowing all of Nietzsche's critique of Modernity is the advent of Nihilism. Less concerned with social justice than with cultural well-being, Nietzsche's main concern in his critique of Modernity is with the manner in which Western culture since Socrates has projected itself on a trajectory which can only have one result, namely a descent into Nihilism. In addition, whereas Marxist critiques would accord a secondary function to art, i.e. less effecting than being affected by a transformation of social relations, for Nietzsche it is art itself, or rather particular kinds of art, which will effect that cultural change which will then transform all political structures.

Returning to Nihilism we recall that, as Nietzsche says, it is a consequence of the fact that 'the highest values devalue themselves' (KSA 12: 9 [35] p. 350). More specifically it is a result of the loss of certainty set against the expectation of certainty promoted by the interpretative horizon of metaphysics, Christianity and science, in short, the whole complex of Western culture. Loss of faith in the 'true' transcendent world leads to a refusal to accept the legitimation of any values, a refusal to accept the tradition which has sustained such beliefs, and as Nietzsche notes in the opening of *The Antichrist*, modern man is plunged into a state of neurosis: '“I know neither my way in nor out; I am everything that knows neither in nor out” laments the modern human' (KSA 6 p. 169). Modernity is characterised for Nietzsche by a sense of loss and confusion, a feeling which threatens to plunge into the abyss of Nihilism. Yet Nihilism is 'ambiguous' (KSA 12: 9 [35] p. 350), and the responses to the crisis of Modernity are various.

I have already commented in previous chapters on the distinction made by Nietzsche and subsequent commentators between active and reactive Nihilism. Reactive Nihilism is that sense of pessimism generated by the weak, in other words those who still cling to the *ideal* of some transcendent, unchanging truth, while at the same time confronted by the loss of legitimacy of any of those values cherished hitherto. The sense of mourning at the loss of such certain truths is accompanied by the conviction of the worthlessness of all existence, since it cannot be justified by some higher authority. Reactive Nihilism gives birth to the desire for revenge, for destruction, and with this we are reminded of Nietzsche's typological classification of the Romantic [die Romantik] in *The Gay Science*, as a destructive condition characterised by precisely that feeling of lack: 'The longing for destruction, change, Becoming can be the expression of a superabundant power pregnant with the future (my term for that, as is known, is "Dionysian"); but it can also be the hate of the ill-constituted, the disinherited, the underprivileged, who destroys, has to destroy, because that which is permanent, indeed all permanence, all Being itself, provokes it and arouses indignation' (KSA 3 p. 621).

One notes here that although superficially such reactive Nihilism seems to have turned against the order and hierarchy of tradition, it is in fact still bound closely to it, and to metaphysics in general, by the spirit of *ressentiment*, by the desire to wreak revenge. It is merely a modern form of the same spirit of *ressentiment* which Nietzsche discerns motivating Christianity in *On the Genealogy of Morals* when he quotes the obvious relish Thomas Aquinas takes in imagining the future sufferings of those non-believers: ‘“Beati in regno coelesti” he says, meek as a lamb, “videbunt poenas damnatorum, ut beatitudo illis magis complacet” [the blessed in the kingdom of heaven will see the punishments of the damned in order that their bliss will be more delightful for them]’ (KSA 5 p. 284). In the case of metaphysics the mark is the constant rancour of philosophers against change and sensuality, and I outlined the ways in which Nietzsche employs temporal and physiological rhetoric to counter such tendencies. In the case of the reactive Nihilists (and Nietzsche regards the growing anarchist movement of his own time as an example of this [KSA 3 p. 622]), energies are turned against the permanent instead. This spirit of revenge which unites the two marks them out as two partners of a self-consuming dialectic. As an analysis of social conditions, Nietzsche’s interpretation can be applied to German history after his death as an explanation of the alarming ease with which the Weimar Republic was transformed into the thousand year Reich of National Socialism. According to Nietzsche’s position, such a change was eminently possible, since the apparent liberalism of the Weimar Republic can now be seen as merely a reactive response to the loss of the political and social certainties of Willhelminian Germany, a reaction which could easily be overturned into its other - the restoration of tradition and certainty, albeit of a brutal and distorted kind.³

Against this can be set active Nihilism, whose character will now be clear on the basis of the analyses of interpretation and temporality in the preceding chapters. Active Nihilism is that sense of freedom brought about by awareness of the contingency of all interpretative horizons, an acceptance of the historicity of all knowledge. It is a recognition of knowledge as the dialectic of interpretative will to power, with everything which that entails.

Having sketched out briefly how Nietzsche characterises the response to the crisis of Modernity (and for him Modernity is synonymous with crisis), it is now necessary to turn to the relation of art to Nihilism, and I shall begin by analysing further what Nietzsche means by the word ‘art’. The term ‘art’ seems to designate many things for Nietzsche, many of which are in conflict. As I claimed in my last chapter, it is important to keep in mind that art, for Nietzsche, consists less of empirical objects than in the state of artistic creativity, and hence his stress on the aesthetics of the artist. Art, considered thus, can be equated with the ‘aesthetic

attitude', a reading which makes more plausible Nietzsche's claim that art is the 'counter-movement to Nihilism'.

As I have pointed out previously, though, art also seems to designate those objects which Nietzsche considers products of the genuine aesthetic drive and, and those fundamentally non-aesthetic objects which modern society still terms works of art. Implicit in this analysis is a notion of authenticity, a word which reminds us of Nietzsche's observation in *The Birth of Tragedy* that a yawning gap has appeared in modern society between 'Bildung' and 'authentic' art. Although the mature writings do not make use of the notion of authenticity explicitly, I am claiming that implicit in Nietzsche's account of art, as well as in his more general interpretation of Modernity, authenticity is nevertheless a central idea, around which much of the argument revolves. This will become clear as I further examine Nietzsche's discussion of art and Modernity.

In his work on Modernity Nietzsche frequently employs the opposition of Classical and Romantic, as artistic metaphors for the active / reactive dichotomy of Nihilism. However they are meant as rather more than just metaphors. The manner in which the problem of Modernity is confronted in art can be regarded as central to understanding the crisis facing contemporary society, and the Classical artistic response, in the form of Dionysian Classicism, should be understood as providing the key to the overcoming of reactive Nihilism in all other spheres of social being. In other words Nietzsche is using the practice of Dionysian Classicism as a device for leading the way, for communicating how one might imagine living in a post-metaphysical, post-Modern society⁴. It is a practice which diverges considerably, however, from the actual artistic responses of Modernism.

Turning our attention to those artistic responses to Modernity which were known to Nietzsche we see two movements being singled out for censure, namely Realism and Romanticism (which latter should be distinguished from the more general typological category of 'die Romantik'). Both movements are the products of Modernity, though they deal with the dissolution of the authority of tradition in very different ways. I shall deal with each in turn, beginning with Romanticism.

One of the principle features of Romanticism for Nietzsche is its status as a neurotic condition. I have indicated previously how Nietzsche describes the decadence of Modernity in medical terms, as a neurosis which needs curing, and his description of Romanticism is no different. Concerning Delacroix, for example, he quotes with approval a passage from the novel *Manette Salomon* by the Goncourt brothers which observes that Delacroix 'is the . . . image of the *décadence* of our time, the spoilt one, confusion . . . the passions, the nerves, the *faiblesses* of our time, modern torment' (KSA 11: 25 [141] p. 51), adding a further comment at the end that 'Delacroix a kind of Wagner' (*ibid.*). A second note in the

Nachlaß quotes another passage from the same novel, half translated and half in French, once again with regard to Delacroix; 'Delacroix - he promised everything, announced everything. His pictures ? Aborted masterpieces; the person who, après tout, will arouse the passions comme tout grand incomplet, a feverish life in all he creates, une agitation de lunettes, un dessin fou' (ibid. 25 [142] p. 51). In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche devotes a lengthy aphorism (§ 256) to the discussion of the late Romantics of France and Richard Wagner. He writes, 'all of them fanatics of expression "at any price" - I emphasise Delacroix, the most closely related to Wagner - all of them great discoverers in the realm of the sublime . . . even greater discoverers as regards effects, display . . . born enemies of logic and straight lines, lusting after the alien, the exotic, the monstrous, the crooked, the contradictory; Tantaluses of the will as human beings, successful plebeians who knew themselves to be incapable of a respectable tempo, a lento in their work and creativity . . . unbridled workers, near self-destroyers in their work, antinomians and rebels against custom, ambitious and insatiable without balance and enjoyment, all of them eventually breaking down and sinking down before the cross (and that with right and reason: for who of them would have been sufficiently profound and original for a philosophy of the Antichrist ?)' (KSA 5 pp. 202-3). In his final analyses of Wagner he goes even further. Wagner does not aim merely to rebel against tradition and custom, rather he panders to the weak; 'Revenge against life itself - the most voluptuous kind of rapture for such impoverished ones ! . . . Wagner just as much as Schopenhauer answers the double requirement of these latter - they deny life, they defame it, thus they are my antipodes' (KSA 6 p. 425). In *The Case of Wagner* Nietzsche once again uses medical imagery, asking 'Is Wagner even a human ? Is he not rather a disease ? He makes everything he touches sickly - he has made music sickly' (ibid. p. 21).

What is significant about all these discussion is the sense of Romanticism as a neurotic condition permeated by confusion. Most especially in the passages on Delacroix, one can see how the reaction against tradition and custom has led to the unleashing of self-destructive energies. It is a confusion accompanied by prolonged, dangerous and decadent introspection, with the emphasis constantly on subjective expression 'at any price'. I say dangerous because the extreme self-absorption which Nietzsche here comments on parallels the birth of asceticism he outlines in *On the Genealogy of morals* . If we recall, asceticism was seen to be dangerous cultural manifestation because it represents a turning of energies, more specifically will to power, against themselves, rather than directing them outwards. Asceticism thus constitutes a fetishism of the process which first generated subjectivity. As Nietzsche writes, 'The whole inner world, originally thin as if stretched between two membranes, extended and expanded, acquired depth,

breadth and height in the same measure as outward discharge was inhibited' (KSA 5 p. 332).

Romantic repressive self-absorption is a state which is to be found in Nietzsche's more general description of modern humanity in *The Antichrist*, stemming from the fact that while the false strictures of custom have been rejected, the transcendent foundation of their authority, which Nietzsche introduces by mentioning the cross, still remains as an object of desire. All the Romantics eventually sink down 'before the Cross', an indication that they too are caught up in the reactive moment of the dialectic of Nihilism. It is an interpretation which suggests that behind their antinomian production there still lies the hope for redemption through some form of restoration of transcendent values, a hope whose lack of fulfilment leads inevitably to despair.

If we consider Realism, we find that in many respects this constitutes the other partner in the dialectic of reactive Nihilism, indeed Nietzsche explicitly refers to Flaubert in *Twilight of the Idols* in such terms; 'On ne peut penser et écrire qu'assis (G. Flaubert). With that I have you, Nihilist !' (KSA 6 p. 64). I have earlier given the grounds for Nietzsche's criticism of Realism, together with the positivism of which it is the product. The criticisms are two-fold. The first is the criticism of the notion that it is possible to produce a non-perspectival representation, and the second is of the notion that there is an objective order of things to be merely reproduced through mimesis. The second objection hardly needs any further treatment, but I shall develop Nietzsche's first critique beyond what I have said previously. As regards the first aspect of Realist myth, Nietzsche is quite clear about the impossibility of the author's transcending his own subjective perspective. In a note from the Nachlaß of 1884 he writes, 'People have regarded as "impersonal" what was the expression of the most powerful persons . . . But the gentlemen would love to hide and be rid of themselves, e.g. Flaubert' (KSA 11: 25 [117] p. 44). Moreover Nietzsche interprets such putative self-transcendence on the part of the artist as an expression of decadence, a denigration of the self which mirrors the Romantic denigration of the objective. In a note from the same notebook Nietzsche says 'It is a self-denigration amongst the moderns, that they would like to "be rid of themselves" in art, just like Schopenhauer - to take refuge in the object, "deny" themselves' (ibid.: 25 [164] p. 57). It is a criticism which he does not retract, noting in *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, that 'In Goethe, for example, superabundance was creative, in Flaubert hate: . . . "Flaubert est toujours haïssable, l'homme n'est rien, l'œuvre est tout" . . . he tortured himself whenever he composed poetry, just as Pascal tortured himself whenever he thought - they both had "unegoistic" sensibilities - the principle of *décadence*' (KSA 6 pp. 426-7).

Realism, too, turns out to be a reactive response to the loss of tradition and the legitimacy of traditional values. This time, however, unlike Romanticism, it does not resort to a destructive and self-destructive resentment against the world, but rather takes refuge in a new alternative order of things, at the same time wiping out the subject who might put the legitimacy of that order in doubt once again. It is a rejection of tradition in the name of a higher objective truth, uncritically reinscribing those values which sustained tradition into a new scheme of values, a phenomenon to which I alluded in the previous chapter.

We can see this process at work if we observe the political issues at stake. As the heir to the values of Saint-Simon, and implicated in the values of socialism⁵, the Realist movement quite consciously espoused a particular political programme, one which consciously chose certain material, and privileged certain subjects over others, yet always this process occurred in the name of some 'truth', be it social, political or artistic. As one commentator has observed, 'the term "Realism" merely betrays an illusion peculiar to the mid-nineteenth century - the illusion that it had found a key to what really is'.⁶

Nietzsche's critique of Realism can be extended to that branch of socially-committed Modernism which strives towards political enlightenment. Not that Nietzsche need be seen as a political reactionary merely by his opposition to the political goals of Realism, for his critique is merely pointing out that the values which Realism and other forms of artistic enlightenment are seeking to overcome are merely reinscribed within the programme of progressive Modernism. It is a criticism which has been taken up by Karl Löwith⁷ who sees the enlightenment project of Modernity as merely a secularised version of the redemptive Messianism of Christianity and the values it is striving to repudiate. Blumenberg's defence of Modernity⁸, namely that the so-called redemptive Messianism of Christianity neither began with Christianity nor is reducible to it actually plays into the hands of the Nietzschean critique, though Löwith himself fails to notice this in his reply.⁹ For Nietzsche's critique is claiming not that Christianity is the originator of the desire for redemptive transcendence, but rather that it is just one of the more marked and influential manifestations of such a desire, a desire of the weak spirit. Modernity and Christianity, on this view, are merely alternative types of the same discursive formation. Blumenberg's defence would be more tenable if it were not for the fact that arch-Modernists and Enlighteners, most especially Jürgen Habermas, still argue in terms of some redemptive goal, even if it is admitted that 'the chances for this today are not very good.'¹⁰ Habermas writes that subsequent to the modern differentiation of reason into the spheres of science, morality and art as institutionalised in Kant's three *Critiques*, the project of Modernity is ultimately to reintegrate the specialised knowledge of these spheres into the life world, 'a

differentiated relinking of modern culture with an everyday praxis'.¹¹ In other words, Habermas is explicitly aiming at that redemptive utopianism so criticised by Nietzsche and Löwith.

If we trace the genealogy of artistic Modernism back to the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* we can see how Nietzsche's awareness of the historicity of the question of art penetrates even further than that of those rebels against tradition of late 18th century Germany. For those advocates of *Sturm und Drang* such as Lenz, Klinger or the young Goethe and Schiller, and the early Romantics who inveigled against the ossification of culture by tradition and rationalisation, failed to realise that the problem did not lie in the particulars of the tradition they were seeking to overcome, but rather in the idea of a normative, atemporal set of values per se. The difference between Nietzsche and Romanticism can be seen at its most apparent in their different uses of the figure of Dionysus. For the Schlegel brothers writing in the *Athenäum* Dionysus represents the true god, who will come to replace Christ once the veil of the Maya has been lifted. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian, as I have suggested before, is a metaphor for the dialectic of the tragic, which can have no recourse to some objective 'truth' in the world. It is this difference which makes Nietzsche sceptical of revolutionary movements of enlightenment, for, as he observes, 'the hate against Becoming, against the careful contemplation of Becoming is common to all morality and revolution' (KSA 13: 15 [53] p. 444).

Nietzsche's critique of Realism and Romanticism opens a way to understanding the grounds for a distinction between authentic and inauthentic art. The inauthentic art of Modernism lacks authenticity because, like opera, it is not the product of the aesthetic creative urge. Rather, although common consent designates the works of Flaubert, Wagner and Delacroix as works of art, they are fundamentally metaphysical, as products of reactive Nihilism, a Nihilism that is unable to think beyond the constraints of metaphysics.

Against this inauthentic art we must place authentic art, which in Nietzsche's thought will be characterised as tragic art. The only proper aesthetic category is that of the tragic, and as such it is also the only proper means of overcoming metaphysics, as an expression of active Nihilism. As will become clear, there is a high degree of congruence between tragedy as first outlined in *The Birth of Tragedy* and those salient aspects of art in Nietzsche's later thought which I have discussed in the preceding chapters.

If we recall, the crucial process at work in tragedy is the dialectic of the Apollinian and the Dionysian, which sets up a discursive order only to then annihilate that selfsame structure of meaning. It is a process which symbolises, in artistic terms, the paradox of human interpretation, for Nietzsche says, 'The

Dionysian truth takes over the whole realm of myth as a symbolism of its insight, and expresses it partly in the cult of tragedy, partly in the secret perpetuation of dramatic mystery festivals' (KSA 1 p. 73). This paradox lies in the simultaneous necessity of both preserving some form of atemporality in order to form a meaningful horizon of action, as Nietzsche perceived in the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, and also of giving full recognition to the temporality of Becoming, which characterises interpretative will to power, i.e. that process whereby a given perspective or horizon of interpretation is constituted. As Josef Simon notes, '“Tragic” irony, released from the earnestness of a belief in fixed symbols, characterises Nietzsche's concept of truth.'¹² It is the dialectic of contingency and necessity, temporality and atemporality I have discussed throughout this study, a dialectic which cannot ever be resolved, and as such is symbolised in the drama of the sacrifice of the tragic hero who is then expelled from the community in order to facilitate the reconstruction of a new episteme after his / her tragic fate has been fulfilled.

This interpretation of tragedy becomes generalised as a model for understanding art per se, and as I have suggested in the previous two chapters, this becomes manifest in such aspects of art as its ambiguity, its fragmentariness, its temporal structure, and in Nietzsche's preference for Dionysian classicism, a style which couples the temporal structure of the tragic to a thematisation of art as will to power, as the 'compulsion-to-transform-into-perfection' [Verwandelnmüssen ins Vollkommene]. Through both its temporal aspects and its thematic presentation of 'will-to-power-at-work', as a 'setting-to-work-of-truth' (in the Nietzschean sense of the word 'truth'), as it were, art carries out that function which I have earlier pointed towards in Nietzsche's thinking, namely of projecting immanence and at the same rejecting any values or notions which betray any suggestion of transcendence or metaphysical truth. Its rejection of beyondness [das Jenseits], its sensual foregrounding of the here and now [Diesseitigkeit] (e.g. KSA 11: 37 [12] pp. 587-8), its tendency to draw both artist and spectator into the temporal loop of Eternal Recurrence in the affirmation of the moment, serve to perform in artistic terms what Nietzsche's philosophy of 'immanence' aims at through his manipulation of the discourse of metaphysics. As Nietzsche says, 'The beautiful, the ugly etc. is the more ancient judgement. As soon as it makes a claim to absolute truth, aesthetic judgement is overturned into moral demands. As soon as we deny absolute truth, we give up any absolute demand and return to aesthetic judgement. This is the task - to create an abundance of aesthetic, equally valid evaluations' (KSA 9: 11 [79] p. 471).

It is this near schizoid coupling of contingency and necessity, ephemerality and permanence, renewal and tradition which Nietzsche sees as the sign of the

strong spirit, the free spirit who is able to confront this constant ambiguity and questionableness. As he notes in a Nachlaß fragment from 1887, 'the preference for questionable and terrible things is a symptom of strength: while the taste for the pretty and the dainty belongs to the weak, the delicate' (KSA 12: 10 [168] p. 556). Far from being a mask to *hide* the meaningless nature of life, as Young maintains,¹³ art acts as provocation to will to power precisely through its presentation of annihilation and destruction, as an interpretative obstacle to will to power. It is in this sense that art is the 'great facilitator of life, the great seductress towards life, the great stimulus to life' (KSA 13: 11 [415] p. 194). For life, in Nietzsche, is not a process of preservation, of stability, but rather one of growth, as his frequent polemics against Darwin testify. Contrary to popular understanding of the tragic, tragic culture is not, for Nietzsche, one that is self-absorbed and self-pitying, caught up in a decadent obsession with its own fortunes and misfortunes. Rather it is marked by a singular boldness and affirmativity of all that is contingent, all that is double-sided, and it is this schizoid affirmation of opposites which causes tragic culture to be characterised as the culture of *tragic* irony. To use the words of Sloterdijk, himself parodying Freud, 'Where values are, there ironies shall be.'¹⁴ And with this return to irony we are brought back, too, to the thematics of distance and the feminine to which I have alluded in previous chapters. For what Nietzsche is pointing towards is a pathos of distance, of which the notion of woman as truth stands as a striking metaphor. Moreover the notion of distance perhaps even serves as a better term than irony, since the common-sense understanding of irony denotes saying something one does not believe.¹⁵ Yet Nietzsche is demanding something far more difficult. Namely that one both believe in what one is saying and at the same time withhold belief in it, inasmuch as its truth is recognised as a matter of mere grammar.

In the light of this analysis, how are we to understand rapture? Thus far rapture has been somewhat forgotten in the course of the discussion, yet as Heidegger stressed in his lectures, the notion of rapture is the cornerstone of Nietzsche's thought on art and the aesthetic state. Of course Heidegger's understanding of rapture is permeated through and through by metaphysics, which parallels his understanding of beauty I have outlined earlier. He notes, for example, that "Rapture is feeling, an embodying attunement, an embodied being that is contained in attunement, attunement woven into embodiment . . . the embodying, attuned stance toward beings as a whole."¹⁶ In other words we are back to the sense of art as somehow a disclosure of Being or beings, an understanding conveyed by Heidegger's use of the notion of attunement [*Stimmung*, *Gestimmtheit*]. Earlier in the same chapter Heidegger writes that rapture 'is that basic mode of our Dasein by force of which and in accordance with which we are

always already lifted beyond ourselves into being as a whole.'¹⁷ Now although Heidegger's post-metaphysical credentials might be established by the last passage, where quite clearly we have discarded the Cartesian subject, his talk of being, beings as a whole, as if they were always already present, must remind us of the distance between his understanding of art and that of Nietzsche. Heidegger's observation that 'rapture and beauty designate with an identical breadth the entire aesthetic state, what is opened up in it and what pervades'¹⁸ can nevertheless serve as a useful starting point. For on the basis of my prior discussion of the importance of art as the counter-movement to (reactive) Nihilism, I would claim simply that rapture designates the sense of exhilaration which accompanies the Dionysian 'tragic' insight into the limitations of symbolic activity, an insight which at the same time acts as a spur to interpretative will to power to lay down better, more potent interpretative horizons. Hence Nietzsche's aesthetic rapture is the result of a complex process of reflection, negation and affirmation. Its lineage is quite clear, for it is formulated on the basis of a generalisation of the sublime, as taken up in the *Birth of Tragedy*, as the basic aesthetic state. Aesthetic because the symbolic representation of the tragic understanding is only properly executed in the authentic work of art.

This rapturous state becomes more comprehensible if we recall Nietzsche's claim that all aesthetics is applied physiology (KSA 6 p. 418). For one of the functions of the physiology of art was, I argued, to secure the relation between art and will to power, inasmuch as the former represents a specific manifestation of the latter. Now as I have shown, this sense of limitation (coupled with ambiguity and the pathos of distance) is both central to art and also obstructive to will to power. Yet far from being incompatible, the two are intimately connected, for will to power as will to *more* power requires negativity. Negativity, in the sense of resistance to its goals, is what spurs will to power into activity and provides the measure against which any increase in power can be assessed. From this one would then conclude that aesthetic rapture connotes that state where will to power is stretched to the limit, by virtue of the fact that art both contradicts will to power and affirms it thereby, constituting the only cultural activity where this double operation truly occurs.

Nietzsche and the Post-modern

On the basis of the above discussion we can see that Nietzsche is in fact formulating a restrictive view of what is to count as art, or more specifically, what is to count as 'authentic' or truly aesthetic art. Now of course at this point one may well feel entitled to object that the notion of authenticity, which I have been freely using is an idea which ill suits Nietzsche's discourse, most especially given my remarks in the

previous chapter concerning the complicity of the authentic with the metaphysical ethic of appropriation. This objection would be perfectly valid *if* I were claiming that Nietzsche is investing the word with the same sort of significance we find in, say, Sartre or Heidegger. This is not, however, what I take the term 'eigentlich', on the few occasions it appears in Nietzsche's œuvre, to be signifying. Rather we must set it against the notion of ideology, with all the connotations which *that* idea has. The latter, as Mark Warren has suggested,¹⁹ does have a place in Nietzsche's thinking, even though one might feel uneasy about its presence in any study of Nietzsche. For if the ideological denotes in Nietzsche that semiotic process which refuses to accept its status as such (and the amnesia of metaphysics would be one such ideology), the authentic would be taken as that which inverts the ideological, i.e. which thematises its own status as representation, as an arbitrary 'language of signs' [Zeichensprache]. Following on from this, albeit cursory, discussion, the work of tragic art would have to be seen as the authentic phenomenon *par excellence*, since what characterises the tragic qua tragic is its foregrounding of its own discursivity, the pathos of distance which it preserves towards itself.

If it can therefore be said that the notion of an authentic artistic practice in Nietzsche does not lead us into incoherence, how might we characterise the relation between this post-Modern phenomenon and the various activities which have come to be seen as characteristic of the Post-modern. Is Nietzsche's overcoming of Modernity assimilable to the Post-modernism which is so hotly debated at present? Or does it represent something of a different order?

The terms within which the debate over the post-modern is usually couched tend to see the modern and the post-modern as chronologically successive states, indeed the very use of the word 'post' compels the issue to be seen in this manner. In the space available one cannot hope to do full justice to the breadth of writers who have dealt with the issue, ranging from Daniel Bell to Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio. If we take the work of Lyotard as representative of a widely accepted view of the post-modern²⁰, we see this notion of temporal succession very much in evidence. Lyotard sees the post-modern as arising from a crisis of legitimacy of the grand or meta-narratives of the Enlightenment. Following Adorno's concern with the meaning of Auschwitz he writes that 'The "philosophies of history" that inspired the nineteenth and twentieth centuries claim to assure passages over the abyss of heterogeneity or the event. The names which are those of "our history" oppose counterexamples to their claim . . . "Auschwitz" refutes speculative doctrine . . . The passages promised by the great doctrinal syntheses end in bloody impasses. Whence the chagrin of the spectators at this end of the twentieth century.'²¹ Lyotard is here giving expression to the common feeling that Enlightenment, both in its liberal bourgeois form and in its manifestation as Marxist

revolution, has singularly failed, both as a project, and as a basis for interpreting the movement of human history, a failure which leads him to conclude that 'We no longer have recourse to the grand narratives - we can resort neither to the dialectic of Spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity'.²² Given this crisis in the legitimacy of rational narratives, Lyotard turns to the aesthetic, most notably to the sublime, as a means to constructing a post-modern political and social theory.

If we turn to Nietzsche, however, we see a certain degree of discord between Lyotard's account of the Post-modern and the type of post-Modern culture of active Nihilism for which Nietzsche is calling. The Post-modern disposition which Lyotard, for one, is proposing, represents less a departure from the 'exhausted' modern than a perpetuation of the aestheticist modernism of late nineteenth century France. Most notably, Lyotard's turn to the sublime, as 'presenting the unrepresentable'²³ can be equated with Symbolist theories of figuration, a perpetuation of France's modernist heritage which, as Andreas Huyssen has noted, finds parallels in the work of Derrida, Kristeva and Baudrillard.²⁴ This retreat into the realm of the aesthetic, and I think it can be termed a retreat, giving up, as it were, on the Enlightenment inheritance, can be seen either as mere defeatism, or more significantly as a cynical abandonment of the critic's political and cultural responsibilities, a view taken up by Christopher Norris in his more recent work.²⁵ Viewed from a Nietzschean perspective, it would amount to a capitulation, giving in to the temptations of reactive Nihilism, which in its rejection of rational Enlightenment and the normativity of tradition has recoiled to the opposite extreme, where the question of interpretative frameworks, of evaluation per se is seen to be redundant.

What I am therefore arguing is that in Nietzsche we need not see the dialectic of modern and post-modern as necessarily temporally successive states, but rather as alternative responses to the self-exhaustion of the rational, of metaphysics, of tradition. As such, the turn to the aesthetic which Lyotard notes and commends merely perpetuates the problem as a reactive response, and is one which must be carefully distinguished from the 'aesthetic turn' in Nietzsche's work.

Yet if Nietzsche is not occupying a position assimilable to that of Lyotard he is nevertheless calling for some sort of artistic practice which should supplant the decadent, 'inauthentic' practices of Modernism, one which will thereby reassert its right to occupy the centre stage of any post-Modern culture. Does post-modern art bear any resemblance to the practices Nietzsche is pointing towards? The suggestion that Nietzsche's idea of tragic art might bear some affinities to Post-modernism is powerful given the extent of his antipathy towards Modernism. I have already mapped out Nietzsche's criticisms of his contemporaries, but the

nature of his opposition to Modernism (as an answer to Modernity) becomes even clearer when we set his aesthetics against the arch-theorist of Modernism, Theodor Adorno.

If we turn to a work such as *Philosophy of Modern Music*²⁶ we see Adorno grappling with the problem of defining the proper artistic response to the crisis of the legitimacy of the inherited musical language. It represents an analogue to the more general sense of crisis which he, in common with Nietzsche, sees as characteristic of Modernity. Permeating Adorno's approach to the issue is the conviction that the dialectic of musical change cannot be turned back, i.e. that the musical language inherited from Classicism is not some timeless entity, but itself the product of a specific set of forces which has now been superseded within history. He notes, 'the dynamic conception of tonality as a whole lends the chord its specific weight. The historical process, however, whereby it has lost it [i.e. its weight] is irreversible. As extinct, the chord represents, in its very dispersal, the position of that technique as a whole, which contradicts the present one' (p. 38). For Adorno the only truly authentic response is therefore to pursue the dissolution of tonality to its logical conclusion, since atonality is 'the completed purification of music from tradition' (p. 42 n.).

Seen in these terms, Schoenberg's twelve-tone music represents a liberation of the subjectivity of the composer from the objectivity of musical form, i.e. the musical tradition, and Adorno sees the history of music as gaining its momentum from the tension between these two poles, the specificity of the artist's style and the generality of the musical vocabulary. As Adorno says, music 'had to come to terms with always meeting the specific by means of constellations of the general, which paradoxically present it as being identical to the unique. Beethoven's entire oeuvre is the exegesis of this paradox' (p. 51). One of the aspects of musical form which mirrors this dichotomy is that opposition between melody, as the subjective, and harmony, as the objective musical grammar, or homophony and polyphony, and twelve-tone music represents a sublation of this opposition (p. 53) inasmuch as the polyphonic is sublated into the purely subjective disposition over the grammar of musical form. Adorno writes, 'The cognitive power of modern music obtains its legitimacy from the fact that it does not reach back to the "great bourgeois past", to the heroic classicism of the period of the Revolution, but rather sublates the Romantic technique of differentiation, and hence its material, into itself. The subject of modern music . . . is the emancipated, isolated real subject of the late-bourgeois phase' (p. 55).

Thus in Adorno's reading, Schoenberg's invention of twelve-tone music with its concomitant rejection of tradition represents a complete subjectification of musical form. The subject remains sovereign over the work, and the work is truly

modern, i.e. as owing nothing to the past. The Hegelian influence at work here is all too apparent, since Adorno's account hardly deviates from the former's interpretation of Romantic art. Now while Nietzsche and Adorno may well be in agreement as regards the fact of subjectification in Modernism, their evaluation of the phenomenon is antithetical. As we have seen, for Nietzsche the preoccupation with the self is a feature of the decadence of modern society, where reactive Nihilism leads to an annihilation of the external order and a retreat into the private sphere of neurotic self-absorption. It is a comment which of course is paralleled by Nietzsche's critical remarks I noted in chapter two concerning democratic culture. I noted before how Nietzsche's ideal of the self-creating *Übermensch* is very different from the democratic ideal of human emancipation, inasmuch as for Nietzsche autonomy, freedom are to be achieved on the basis of an agonistic politics, not to be granted without any effort. As Nietzsche observes, 'The value of a thing lies not in what one can achieve with it, but in what one has paid for it, - what it costs us. I shall give an example. Liberal institutions. . . undermine the will to power, they are the levelling of mountain and valley given moral legitimacy. . . with them the herd animal always triumphs' (KSA 6 p. 139-40). Criticising the unfought for freedom of Modernity Nietzsche writes, in his early essay on Homer, 'The modern human is in contrast everywhere crossed by infinity, like swift-footed Achilles in the similes of Zeno the Eleate, infinity restricts him, he doesn't even catch up with the tortoise' (KSA 1 p. 790).

In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche comments similarly in an aphorism entitled 'Freedom I do not intend' (KSA 6 p. 143) that 'the demand for independence, for free development . . . this is the case *in politicis*, this is the case in *art* [my emphasis]. But that is a symptom of *décadence*: our modern concept of "freedom" is one more indication of the degradation of the instincts' (ibid.). It is a criticism which represents a specific application of Nietzsche's more general argument that will to power, as that which underlies politics, knowledge, and, more importantly, art requires resistance. Will to power is always will to more power.

Given such a perspective on Nietzsche, we can see more clearly the depth of his anti-Modernist stance. His hostility toward the subjectivism of Modernist art stems from both a political antagonism toward the democratic motivation of such art, and also from his more general underlying conception of the dialectic of interpretative will to power. His stance is not so much a reactionary stance against innovation per se as against the melancholic self-absorption which accompanies it, an understanding which is confirmed by Adorno's own interpretation of the significance of modern music.

Now if Nietzsche is hostile to the kind of art which Adorno sees and commends as being authentically modern, is he any more sympathetic to the Post-modern? Well, if we turn back to Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music* we can gain some sense of his possible response by following through Adorno's essay on Stravinsky. Stravinsky is widely seen as the precursor of Post-modernism, most especially in his neo-classical work, and moreover one might go further as has David Roberts²⁷ by suggesting that the Post-modern is already there in all its essentials in Stravinsky's work. It is a claim I shall develop further.

In contrast to his reading of Schoenberg Adorno sees Stravinsky as a reactionary, trying to turn back the clock by the restitution of obsolete forms. He begins his essay on Stravinsky by quoting a passage from Hegel's *Aesthetics*; 'It is no good materially appropriating, as it were, past world views . . . like, for example, becoming Catholic [sic !]' (p. 121). This serves as the guiding principle in his interpretation of Stravinsky and other composers such as Webern and Hindemith, whom he sees as all reactionary in comparison with the authentic modernism of Schoenberg. He claims, for example, that 'In Stravinsky the desire of an adolescent to become a Classic remains stubbornly at work' (p. 122), adding that 'Even the most perfect song by Webern remains far behind the most simple piece of the *Winterreise* in authenticity' (ibid.).

The work above all of Stravinsky has resolved the dialectic of innovation and tradition, which he also sees as one between the subjective autonomy of the artist and the objectivity of the musical grammar, in favour of the latter, and in consequence Adorno sees a parallel, quite striking in light of Nietzsche's own remarks, between Stravinsky, Positivism and Flaubert. Stravinsky's music executes a negation of the subject by passing over into the objective, a process symbolised above all in *The Rite of Spring*. Adorno writes, 'In Stravinsky subjectivity takes on the character of sacrifice, but - and here he is mocking the tradition of humanistic art - music does not identify itself with the sacrificial victim, but rather with the moment of annihilation. Through the liquidation of the sacrificial victim it divests itself of intention, of its own subjectivity' (p. 127). As such it is a musical parallel to Flaubert; 'The music says immediately: "so it was", and adopts perspective just as little as does Flaubert in *Madame Bovary*. Horror is looked on with some pleasure, but it is not transfigured' (p. 130). Adorno comments later, 'According to his implicit philosophy, he [Stravinsky] belongs to Machian Positivism: "the ego is beyond rescue". According to his method he belongs to a Western art whose highest achievement is the work of Baudelaire, where the individual enjoys his own annihilation through the power of sensation' (p. 147). This last comment, on the method of Stravinsky refers to the composer's use of rhythmical shock, as a means of conjuring up the collective pre-conscious, pre-

individual, a goal which betrays the influence of Jung (p. 143). It is an art, which, in its annihilation of the subjective simultaneously annihilates all expression, 'The "indifference to the world" leads to the derivation of all affects from the non-ego, to a narcissistic indifference towards the lot of humans . . . his rhythmical method comes close to the scheme of catatonic states' (p. 156).

The consequence of this elimination of the subject in Stravinsky is a releasing of the tension between individual and style on the one hand, and universal musical form on the other, which we have earlier seen as the fundamental paradox of Western music. In place of the individual artist is the self-less pastiche of quotations of other works, spontaneity gives to way to reproduction; 'the subject . . . ceases actually to "produce", and satisfies itself with the hollow echo of the objective musical language, which is no longer its own' (p. 160). Later Adorno adds, '*L'Histoire du Soldat* permits a second, dreamlike regressive musical language to form from the shattered ruins of abandoned musical language' (p. 161). Against the Modernist idea of a progressive dialectic of ever renewed artistic forms, Stravinsky's music 'encompasses the basic demand of traditional art: that something should sound as if it had been there from the beginning of time signifies that it repeats what had already been there at all times' (p. 189), an inclusion which almost inevitably will lead to the development of Neo-classicism. Stravinsky's music thus foreshadows the wider characteristics of the Post-modern, as a rejection of the grand narrative of human emancipation through rational autonomy. It is a rejection of the Enlightenment spirit of progress which inverts the development of musical form and merely parrots the broken fragments of the tradition indiscriminately, since the annihilation of the subject means the loss of any organising principle.

Following Adorno's account, and initially leaving aside his negative evaluation of Stravinsky's work, it does appear that Nietzsche's adoption of the tragic and of Dionysian Classicism places him close to Stravinsky. After all, is not Stravinsky's prurient delight in the annihilation of the subject akin to Nietzsche's account of the tragic, where the death of the tragic hero serves less as a form of therapeutic catharsis than as a risk to be affirmed to for its own sake? And does not Nietzsche's Dionysian Classicism tie in both Stravinsky's appropriation of past forms (and here we see the figure of Eternal Recurrence looming on the horizon) and also the ritual sacrifice of the autonomous ego of metaphysics? Phrasing the question in this way, the grounds for assuming a high level of congruence become superficially quite convincing. Despite surface similarity, however, I would nevertheless argue that Nietzsche's post-Modernism is similar to neither the embryonic Post-modernism in Stravinsky nor the Post-modernism of contemporary culture. The contemporary post-modern culture of Jameson's famous analysis²⁸,

with its emphasis on the 'deconstruction of expression', on the loss of affectivity, self-annihilation and nostalgia replicates many of the insights of Adorno's analysis of Stravinsky, though without being restrained by the terms of Adorno's dialectic. By driving a wedge between the neo-classicism of Stravinsky and the Dionysian Classicism of Nietzsche I am ultimately implying that the term post-modern is perhaps an inappropriate designation for Nietzsche's own overcoming of the modern.

The apparent similarities between Stravinsky and Nietzsche are compelling. After all, is not Stravinsky's ritual sacrifice of the subject in *The Rite of Spring* close to the annihilation of the tragic hero in Greek drama? Are not Stravinsky's use of rhythm, his primitivism and infantilism with their parallel in the work of Jung similar to Nietzsche's insistence on reducing so much of human conscious activity to the working of the instincts? Is not Stravinsky's playing with the detritus of the tradition similar to Nietzsche's ironic playing with forms?

In one sense this is true. On the basis of my reading of Nietzsche, however, it is an understanding which needs a certain amount of correction. First, as Adorno notes, in the work of both Schoenberg and Stravinsky an 'objectivity is posited subjectively' (p. 67). In the case of Schoenberg it is the autonomous subjectivity of the artist, to whom all material and technique are made subordinate, whereas in Stravinsky it is the collective, the unconscious, the tradition. Naturally such notions of 'objectivity' have no place in Nietzsche's project - and hence Adorno's comment on the similarity of Stravinsky to Flaubert accords well with Nietzsche's critique of Realism and of the mimetic view of art per se. There can be no artistic form produced in the name of some higher objectivity which transcends the subjectivity, the perspective, of the artist.

Hence we come to the second area of divergence. The annihilation of the subject. In Stravinsky, as well as in such post-modern works as Lyotard's *Economie Libidinale*²⁹ or Deleuze and Guattari's two-volume study of capitalism and schizophrenia³⁰ the elimination of the subject by the workings of the libidinal machine is absolute and echoes Adorno's comment that in the music of Stravinsky 'the individual becomes immediately aware of his nullity in the face of the gigantic machine of the whole system' (p. 138). As I have argued previously, however, Nietzsche's critique of the subject is a critique of a particular conception of the subject, namely the Cartesian atomic, self-certain individual. Additionally, in *The Birth of Tragedy* I have shown that the ritual annihilation of the hero is a strategic move, one which is not final inasmuch as the dialectic of the Dionysian and the Apollinian always remains unresolved. With this I am of course bringing us back to the question of interpretation, and the necessity of maintaining both a horizon of interpretative values and the possibility of their imminent extinction. In the realm of

the subject, its annihilation must be accompanied by the acceptance of its fictive necessity. It is this insight which somehow preserves the possibility of individual style in the face of Jameson's apocalyptic remarks that 'The disappearance of the individual subject, along with its formal consequence, the increasing unavailability of the personal *style*, engender the well-nigh universal practice today of what may be called pastiche . . . the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture,'³¹ even though in Nietzsche the individual is deprived of the rational autonomy granted it by metaphysics. It is this, too, which is the basis of the meaning of tragic irony. For irony in the sense of dissimulation, feigned belief in something can only have any meaning in a culture of 'as-if', to borrow Vaihinger's phrase³², in other words, a culture that must feign to believe in the permanence and necessity of its own contingent perspectives³³. If it fails to preserve an ironic stance towards value, towards interpretative perspectives, then it falls into the abyss of cynical relativism. Indeed one might say that for Nietzsche the crisis of Nihilism is brought about by a lack of irony.

In the terms of the discussion, then, one could say that the post-modern has lost any sense of irony precisely through its inability to recognise the necessity of some interpretative horizon. If Jameson's diagnosis quoted above constitutes an accurate reflection of the state of current artistic production, then this stems from the complete absence of perspective, an absence which leads to a paralysis of action, one which leaves us pointlessly playing with the fragments of tradition in an entirely indiscriminate way.

Nietzsche's early analysis in the second of the *Untimely Meditations* of the problem of time turns out to offer a pertinent criticism of the condition of post-modernity. If the crisis in the legitimacy of the narrative of Enlightenment has led to a change in the understanding of time, as Habermas assumes³⁴, then it is a transformation which has led to post-modern culture being overburdened by the past, a culture unable to establish a horizon of atemporality to facilitate any further action. Jameson's understanding of pastiche accords well with Nietzsche's own interpretation, inasmuch as artistic production is left with nothing but the blank imitation of dead forms, and moreover without the sense of irony or parody, which Jameson sets against it.

At this stage in the discussion we come to the third and final point of divergence between Nietzsche and the post-modern, namely the difference between the Dionysian Classicism of the Nietzschean aesthetic and the neo-Classicism of Stravinsky or the pastiche of the post-modern. The post-modern break with the idea of progress culminates in a full absorption into the past (what Nietzsche might term 'Antiquarian' history) since any sense of the present, of the new is conspicuously

absent. It is an inability to gain any critical distance to the past, to the inherited grammar of forms which Nietzsche had already criticised in modern culture in § 23 of *The Birth of Tragedy* (KSA 1 p. 147-8).

In contrast, however, Dionysian Classicism, as the fullest expression of art as will to power, engages in the dialectic of the new with the old. Much as in tragedy the symbolic order is simultaneously negated and re-affirmed, so will to power, Dionysian Classicism, simultaneously affirms the new (will to power is always will to *more* power, to *better* perspectives) and selectively preserves those past perspectives which can serve as a resource for the furtherance of will to power. It is a non-cumulative dialectic which both discards useless perspectives and preserves those which have some use value *for present purposes*.

Once again we need only remind ourselves of Nietzsche's admiration for the Renaissance precisely because it was not characterised for him as an insipid replication of Classical Antiquity, but rather an appropriation of the past under a certain perspective, one which accords well with his own anti-Platonic polemic. Nietzsche writes, for example, 'My recovery, my preference, my cure from all Platonism was Thucydides every time. Thucydides and perhaps the *Principe* of Macchiavelli are most closely related to me by their unconditional will not to fool themselves' (KSA 6 p. 156), an attitude we see repeated in his confession of a 'yearning for . . . virtù, for "the strong human"' (KSA 12: 10 [2] p. 454). In this light, one could view the post-modern as a latter-day Renaissance gone awry, with no critical perspective and no critical distance from that which has gone before. Nietzsche's interpretation of the Renaissance parallels, of course, his rethinking of time under the sign of eternal recurrence, as that which facilitates the execution of the monumental, unmarked by a feeling of resentment against the past and against temporality per se.

We can conclude, then, that at the heart of Nietzsche's conception of authentic art there lies irony. Irony is not to be understood as merely a cynical disposition towards form, content or value, but rather an irresolvable tension between the opposing demands for negation and affirmation. As such irony involves a feeling of pleasure at such a lack of resolution, a commitment to all that is questionable, a 'preference for questionable and terrible things,' which Nietzsche interprets as 'a symptom of strength: while the taste for the pretty and the dainty belongs to the weak, the delicate' (KSA 12: 10 [168] p. 556). Neither Modernism as manifest in Romanticism or in the work of Schoenberg, nor the Post-modernism diagnosed by Adorno or Jameson have the sense of the ironic. Instead they are concerned either with establishing a new objective order in the wake of the collapse of the traditional order or with playing with the fragments of the tradition, devoid of any real purpose. In the case of Modernism we see a turn to the subjectivity of the

artist, to expressivity, as the new principle which determines all production. Nietzsche and Adorno are merely analysing different manifestations of the same phenomenon, a reading which reminds us of the close links between Adorno and Romanticism. In the case of the post-modern, the new principle lies in the objectivity of the inherited vocabulary of forms, where the subjective claim to self-assertion, and as Blumenberg notes, this concern lies at the core of the Modernist project³⁵, is extinguished by immersion in the symbolic order, an extinction loudly proclaimed by the death of the author thesis of Foucault and others. As movements, these do not manage to break out of the grasp of metaphysics, and as such, can be counted as varying manifestations of the same reactive Nihilism, modern counterparts to the Romantic and realist movements of Nietzsche's own day.

Art contra Science

So far I have deliberately avoided the question which is perhaps begging to be asked, and it concerns the relation of art to science. The theme follows quite easily on from the last inasmuch as the Post-modern represents a collapsing of the three autonomous spheres of aesthetics, epistemology and ethics into each another. Now although Nietzsche does not occupy a position which can be easily identified with the Post-modern, he nevertheless does seem to bear some common interest in the fate of this Enlightenment division of culture. This is not least the case, of course, with *The Birth of Tragedy*, which stands as a provocation to the traditionally accepted norms of scholarly discourse. It is also true of, say, his concern with the marginalisation of art in Modernity, a phenomenon which surely can be possible only subsequently to the identification of an autonomous sphere of the aesthetic.

Yet if this is the case, does this not present problems for my entire thesis? For the manner in which I have presented my argument has made it quite clear that for Nietzsche the possibility of overcoming metaphysical and modern culture is built on the retrieval of an authentic artistic praxis from the margins where Socratic culture has relegated it. I have been assuming, therefore, that we can talk in a meaningful way about the difference between art and science, or to put it in more contemporary terms, literature and philosophy, and furthermore I have been assuming that Nietzsche supports a distinction of this kind too. The assumption, however, can be put into question for a number of reasons.

First, Nietzsche is important as one of the first thinkers to have cast doubt on the inherited belief in a difference between conceptual and metaphorical language. His early essay of 1873 'On Truth and Falsehood in the Extra-moral Sense' has been seminal in this regard shaping his contemporary reception by

commentators such as Derrida³⁶, DeMan, Kofman, and so forth, and it is of course a claim central to that essay that language is metaphorical before anything else. Not only does it sustain a metaphorical relation to the extra-linguistic (and also to other semiotic systems, of course) but also the very possibility of a conceptual scheme is founded on the metaphorical extension of identical terms to the non-identical.

The second objection to a distinction between art and science stems from Nietzsche's observation that all forms of interpretation are will to power, a claim which would surely place art on a level with science, philosophy, morality and religion. As manifestations of will to power all represent an interpretative shaping of the environment in accordance with the furtherance of life. Metaphysics and the ascetic ideal are just as much expressions of will to power as is art and tragic culture, even though they may seem superficially to be different.

The first defence against this objection would be that despite the apparent undermining of any distinction between the two in Nietzsche's text, he nevertheless continues to speak of them as different cultural phenomena. Most especially in the later writings the artist is seen as a particular kind of individual, as a latter-day free spirit who will supplant the atrophied types of Socratic culture, namely the scientist, the moralist. It is a result of this distinction between the artist and the moralist or the scientist that Nietzsche can talk of art as 'the great facilitator of life, the great seductress towards life, the great stimulus to life' (KSA 13: 11 [415] p. 194). Evidently, there is a perceived difference between the two cultural formations in Nietzsche's texts, even though at present it is not quite clear what that might be, and despite the apparent tendency in Nietzsche's texts to level the distinction.

The second defence against the premature dissolution of these spheres would have to consist of a way of formulating a new type of distinction, one which did not rely on the now questionable opposition of literal and metaphorical. The point is important inasmuch as post-structuralist thinkers have assumed that the demonstration that language in philosophical texts is permeated by figurality also goes to show that any real distinction between the two genres is untenable. As a counter-claim I would argue that this merely shows the inadequacy of any distinction based on the criterion of language type. It does not, however, entitle us to dissolve the one into the another. In order to suggest other ways in which a distinction can be made I shall draw on the *Interpretationsphilosophie* of Günter Abel, itself deeply indebted to the work of Nietzsche.³⁷ In so doing I shall begin by focusing on the issue of interpretative horizons.

Abel adopts Nietzsche's emphasis on philosophy as philology, his use of the paradigm of interpretation in place of that of knowing, to turn interpretation,

interpretativity into a quasi-transcendental principle. Indeed the interpreting subject in Abel becomes a function of the interpretative process, echoing Nietzsche's own comments that the question of *who* is interpreting is eclipsed by the process of interpretation itself (KSA 12: 2 [151] p. 140). As such Abel sees the word 'interpretation' as denoting a complex process, inasmuch as he observes three levels of interpretative activity, each of which involves the positing of a separate interpretative horizon.

The first level of interpretation, which Abel denotes as 'interpretation₁', consists in that fundamental horizon which informs and precedes experience. This would correspond to Kant's ideas concerning the role of space and time as forms of intuition, i.e. as the *sine qua non* of sensuous experience. In Nietzsche we would have to include the constitutive function of language and human physiology in determining the general structure of experience, whence Nietzsche's exclamation that 'I fear we shall never be rid of God because we believe in grammar' (KSA 6 p. 78), or his claim that 'the development of language and the development of consciousness . . . go hand in hand' (KSA 3 p. 592). In this regard I have indicated in my second chapter the extent to which belief in the atomic Cartesian subject is a function of certain linguistic phenomena, including a reification of the grammatical subject of the verb, which leads to a tendency to posit for every action an agent. As I suggested in previous chapters, too, the metaphysical denigration of Becoming and of contingency in general can be seen, too, as a result of the temporal structure built into the system of iterable signs of language.

The second level of interpretation, which, perhaps predictably, Abel denotes as 'interpretation₂' would consist in those culturally informed horizons, more specific than the generalised horizons set by human physiology and the structure of the language, but nonetheless informing the interpretative understanding of the members of any one community.

The third level of interpretation, 'interpretation₃' would consist in those specific interpretations which the term 'interpretation' is normally used to signify. They consist of propositions about the world as constituted by the horizon opened up by 'interpretations₁₊₂', to use Abel's rather inelegant designation. As Abel notes, those quotidian judgements we make about the world, those propositional interpretations we make about our world are nothing else than interpretations of interpretations, a conclusion which reminds us of Nietzsche's claim that all our interpretations are of signs, and not of originary phenomena. By this definition truth would be a matter of agreement between those individual interpretations₃ and the world as constituted by a primary process of world-constitutive 'interpretation₁₊₂'; Abel claims, for example that 'Interpretation is not dependent on truth but truth on interpretation.'³⁸ Hence one can criticise the metaphysical, or Platonic,

understanding of truth without descent into the abyss of complete relativism, as Abel notes.³⁹ For replacing the paradigm of knowing as unconcealment of the 'facts' with one of knowledge as interpretation does not open the door to an arbitrary choice of perspectives; the horizon opened up by 'interpretations₁₊₂' determines which interpretations₃ are true and which false by laying down the criteria for any judgement. Even the correspondence theory of truth, where truth is seen as a matter of 'being true to the facts' can be accommodated by this view, since, as Abel notes, 'That there are facts *cannot* be a fact, but rather an interpretation,'⁴⁰ in other words, it is the process of interpretation which determines what is to count as 'fact' at all.

This brief excursus regarding levels of interpretation, far from being irrelevant to the question of art and science or literature and philosophy as interpretative practices actually serves to delimit a criterion for distinguishing between the two. Regardless of the nature of the results achieved, i.e. whether they are to be seen as true in some Platonic sense, or merely projected onto the world according to the model inherited from Kant, the arguments of philosophical texts consist of propositions about the world. Although Plato's dialogues are different in many fundamental ways from the works of Nietzsche, or Derrida, to take a contemporary example, they nevertheless have in common with them the feature of making certain assertions about the world, experience, knowledge, and so forth. Derrida's elucidation of the operation of *différance* in language, or Nietzsche's claim that 'all truth is a lie', is as much an assertion about a certain state of affairs as is Plato's that virtue is knowledge or that knowledge is recollection, even if that assertion is accompanied by a parallel acknowledgement of the interpretative status of such assertion.

I would claim that against this universal propositional character of philosophy, however, literature or art does not constitute interpretation at this level, i.e. propositions concerning the world as already constituted by the process of interpretation₁₊₂, interpretations whose validity can be disputed or asserted, and it is this which makes art the key to the overcoming of Nihilism for Nietzsche. Moreover the opposition should not be that between art and philosophy, but rather between art and those interpretative horizons which make philosophy (or metaphysics, since the two are identical in Nietzsche's writings) possible. Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, though it focuses on what he considers to be the errors of the philosophers, is ultimately concerned with the *presuppositions* of the philosophers, i.e. those world-constitutive interpretations₁₊₂ which create the space within which philosophy operates. I have indicated in earlier chapters how Nietzsche coins a new set of terms, such as Becoming, philology, physiology, Eternal Recurrence and will to power as part of a strategy to move away from the

presuppositions which sustain the philosophical project. Ultimately, though, this strategy is bound to fail unless a transformation of those deeper world-constitutive interpretations is also enacted, and it is art which will facilitate this.

Art does not consist in a series of propositions about the world, the self, knowledge or morality. Even an analysis of the ideological underpinning of a particular work of art, or of a particular artist does not amount to an elucidation of the propositional content of that work. This is most apparent in the case of musical compositions. It may seem a trivial point, but it is nevertheless important to stress the difference between the two. Adorno interprets the work of Schoenberg as the culmination of modern bourgeois consciousness and as a defence of bourgeois ideology against the threat to modern subjectivity. Despite this view, however, one cannot talk in meaningful terms of the propositional content of *Verklärte Nacht* or the *Gurrelieder*.

At the same time as making such a claim, however, it has to be admitted that art, for Nietzsche does bring forth a particular world, as interpreted by will to power, a reading I have argued for in earlier chapters. The notion of bringing forth, of course, does indicate the sense in which art is an interpretation; for it suggests that art belongs to that level of interpretation which is world-constitutive, i.e. art produces a world, interpretations₃ of which can be subsequently made. Here we are reminded of the importance of Nietzsche's critique of any view that art is somehow world-disclosive, a critique which would, of course, apply equally to later thinkers such as Heidegger or Dufrenne and to Nietzsche's predecessors, most notably Schopenhauer or the early German Romantics. Art does not disclose an already determinate world, or even pure Being, rather it sets the interpretative horizon within which the world is understood, within which it is interpreted *as* world.

Herein lies its importance: art, and in particular tragedy, produces a world permeated by the contingent, by ambiguity, by the Here-and-now, a world which establishes a set of interpretative horizons fundamentally different from those which have made meaningful the propositions of metaphysics and philosophy. To overcome the errors of metaphysicians, and in short to overcome reactive Nihilism, one has to overcome the world which makes questions of philosophy meaningful and relevant, which makes reactive Nihilism a very real response to the self-disclosing flaws of the Western tradition. In this context, then, it is no surprise that Socratic culture has either been completely hostile to art, has alienated it, or contrived to persuade artists to produce the trivial, inauthentic art of opera, Romanticism or Realism, to name those types that recur in Nietzsche's work most frequently. For the continued existence of an authentic artistic practice would be inimical to the declared goals of Socratic culture, which is sustained by a fundamentally different world horizon.

Ironist that he is, Nietzsche is pointing toward the dissolution of his own project, for he is making assertions about that which precedes his assertions, and ultimately indicating its inadequacy. Apart from his foray into the artistic in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* Nietzsche's work, despite its avowed distance from the tradition, is in fact caught up in it, and is forced to argue about those same issues which have been regarded as important by the metaphysicians. In arguing for the adoption of a tragic cultural horizon he can at most point toward that which cannot be articulated within the linguistic resources available to him. For the adoption of interpretative horizons, although determined by the general structure of language, is something which occurs beyond language. To borrow Wittgenstein's distinction, it is a matter of showing which precedes and makes possible any act of saying. This is not to commit oneself to seeing interpretations₁₊₂ as consisting in an ostensive relation to the empirical world. Rather it is merely to claim that originary interpretation, the artwork, shows the world it has constructed according to will to power. It is for other discourses to say what has to be shown, and what can be said is shaped by what art has chosen to show. We see here, too, how important the physiology of art is in Nietzsche, for it binds art to that originary level of interpretation₁₊₂, including the body, which constitutes the limits of each interpretative act.

Perhaps from this perspective, too, we can see the full implication of the 'raging discordance' between art and truth in Nietzsche, to which Heidegger has attached so much importance. The discordance does not arise from Nietzsche's claim that art is mendacious; as I have argued before this claim can be seen as a strategic move designed to counter the Romantic equation of art with truth. The discordance arises from the fact that art precedes truth. Truth as a function of grammar and human physiology, to name but two interpretative constituents, arises from a comparison of individual interpretations₃ with the horizons set by world-constitutive interpretation₁₊₂; these latter determine the truth criteria of the former. If we maintain that artistic practice actually constitutes a world, in the sense of the latter type of interpretation, then it is difficult to see how one can regard a work of art as either true or false. The work of art represents a setting-into-work-of-truth as I have claimed earlier, but this does not entitle us to judge the truth content of that process itself. One might claim, in parallel to Heidegger's assertion that 'Being is not a being', that the setting-into-work-of-truth is neither true nor false; it is not a proposition which could be judged according to some external set of criteria of correctness, since it constitutes, indeed *is* that set of criteria.

Conclusion

During the course of this thesis I have assembled Nietzsche's heterogeneous writings on art to forge a coherent theory of art. Without seeking to reduce their multiplicity, the key to Nietzsche's thoughts lies in the consideration of how art can hold in check necessity and contingency in the dialectic of interpretation. This holding in check is deemed necessary by Nietzsche inasmuch as it constitutes the only credible basis for evaluation after the overcoming of metaphysics. The dialectic of interpretation which is only truly effected in art combines a recognition of the contingency of values with a continued belief in their necessity. We have seen how Nietzsche's concern stems from a reaction to a particularly modern problem, since Modernity for Nietzsche is that period when the paradoxes of metaphysics finally becomes apparent, when 'the highest values devalue themselves'.

Nietzsche's recognition of this theme and the concomitant crisis of Nihilism sets him apart from Modernist artists and writers, who seek to replace the foundational discourse of metaphysics with an alternative one. This is especially apparent in the obsession from Rousseau onwards with primitive humanity. This obsession leads to attempts to reconstitute the state of pre-modern humanity as a way out of its fallen state, whether it be in Rousseau's political programme, early twentieth century Primitivism or modern anthropology's interest in 'primitive' tribes. While Nietzsche does contend that philosophy is atavism there can be no hankering after imaginary pre-lapsarian states. For these hopes bear the mark of metaphysics just as much as does modern science and industrial society, for they are foundational discourses. Against this we have seen that Nietzsche is seeking a non-foundational type of thinking, and it is his contention that art can best make meaning in a world devoid of any anchor point.

We have seen how art achieves this in a number of ways. It begins with Nietzsche's recognition of the tragic annihilation and restitution of meaning, and becomes most explicit in the relation of art to will to power and Eternal Recurrence. As has become apparent, certain forms of art act as the locus where interpretative will to power and Eternal Recurrence come together through their denial of the transcendent. We have seen that transcendence is based on a particular understanding of time and the cognitive process, an understanding which cannot be accommodated by the work of art. Art thus functions as the site of immanence, producing a world denuded of any suggestion of a beyond, in both temporal and ontological terms. Implicit in Nietzsche's account is a distinction between 'authentic' art, which he sees as marginalised by theoretical culture, and 'inauthentic', or simply 'unaesthetic' art. This latter could be seen as the usurpation

of artistic forms by metaphysics, and in Chapter four I discussed how the genuine art form of tragedy has been usurped for Nietzsche by the metaphysical disposition of Florentine opera and the Wagnerian 'Gesamtkunstwerk'. Indeed the young Nietzsche was himself fooled by such works, pinning false hopes on Wagner before recognising the latter's concern with the familiar theme of transcendence and redemption. Yet Nietzsche still sees aesthetic education as the key to cultural renewal, hoping that some time in the future the notion of artistic forms being used to promote metaphysical values will become a laughable curiosity of the past.

I considered, finally, the relation between Nietzsche's 'aesthetic attitude' and that of Post-modernism. Both share a suspicion towards the Enlightenment discourse of redemption through reason, and as I have suggested, Nietzsche has little time for Modernism, which while denying the tyranny of reason seeks redemption through its other, for example the unconscious, the primitive, artistic form, or the consciousness of the working classes. Despite this shared refusal of such naive optimism, however, I have argued that Nietzsche nevertheless differs considerably from the stance of such Post-modern theorists as Lyotard or Stanley Fish. These latter have, in the terms of the Nietzschean discourse, accomplished the first stage of the overturning of metaphysics, namely the discrediting of its claims to knowledge. They have not, however become 'accomplished Nihilists'. In other words they have not gone on to form a critical discourse for which anything matters, yet which does not share the delusions of metaphysics. This is most apparent in Fish's rhetoric of assent and Lyotard's (mis-)application of Wittgenstein's notion of language games. For Fish critical discourse has no function other than to affirm those beliefs which sustain the culture of which it is a product. That this clashes with Nietzsche's conception of interpretation as will to power hardly needs arguing. Similarly, Lyotard, for whom language is comprised of a multiplicity of heterogeneous language games, contends that the task of critique is thereby surpassed. In his haste to discredit the totalitarian discourse of reason, Lyotard has embraced its opposite, i.e. the absolute heterogeneity of all types of discourse, a conclusion which shares with Fish a renunciation of critical discourse. This critical paralysis is shared by Post-modern art and literature, which have departed both from the tradition and from any notion of a progressive Modernist aesthetic praxis, yet without offering in its place. The end result would thus be seen as an extended toying with the fragments of past artistic forms, devoid of any critical concern. To this extent, then, Nietzsche would have to be seen as closer to the project of Enlightenment, for his constant goal is the production of a higher culture, a goal which has no sense for the discourse of the Post-modern. Where Nietzsche does depart from Enlightenment is in his renunciation of any final state.

This stems from his privileging of interpretation. Interpretation, engaged on an infinite dialectic of perspectival expansion, can never have as its goal some final point of absolute knowledge. It can, though, have a goal of more power. This leads to an affirmation of the *process* of Enlightenment without an affirmation of its utopian telos. The Übermensch is not some final state for humanity to aim for, but rather the embodiment of an attitude of active Nihilism, an attitude which is expressed in art. And this is Nietzsche's lesson for us. We can *talk* about metaphysics. We can rehearse all the arguments against its delusions, but we cannot thereby escape its grasp. For theoretical discourse is by its very nature metaphysical. The logic of conceptual language has to mask its origins. The only way to properly renounce metaphysics is to renounce theory and become artists. To do this is, of course, to renounce everything for which humanity has been taken to stand, since Aristotle's definition of the human as a rational being, and this is what Nietzsche is perhaps indicating in his call for the Übermensch.

Notes;

¹ See Alan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity. Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).

² The word 'Bildung' indicates not just formal education, but also general learning and attainment of cultural sophistication. For a fuller discussion of the word and its significance in Nietzsche's work see David Cooper, *Authenticity and Learning*.

³ Nietzsche's analysis of reactive Nihilism could be compared to Peter Sloterdijk's account of cynicism in the Weimar Republic in his extraordinary book *The Critique of Cynical Reason*. Sloterdijk writes, 'Cynicism is enlightened false consciousness . . . it articulates the uneasiness that sees the modern world steeped in cultural insanities, false hopes and their disappointment, in the progress of madness and the suspension of reason' (p. 217). Owing much to Nietzsche's account, Sloterdijk sets this in juxtaposition to 'kynicism' which he characterises as 'Existence in resistance, in laughter, in refusal, in the appeal to the whole of nature and a full life' (p. 218). The similarity to the free spirit, the active Nihilist in Nietzsche, is more than coincidental. With regard to my claim that the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany share strong internal similarities, Sloterdijk, significantly, sees cynicism, i.e. reactive Nihilism, as responsible for the horrific medical 'experiments' carried out on prisoners in concentration camps in Nazi Germany. Cf. pp. 266-75; 'Medical Cynicism'.

⁴ When referring to what Nietzsche imagines to be supplanting the metaphysical culture of Modernity, I shall use the term post-Modern, using orthography to distinguish between this and what is more commonly known as the Post-modern.

⁵ For a useful guide to the relation between Saint-Simonism, Realism and the early Marx, see Margaret Rose, *Marx's Lost Aesthetic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁶ Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987) p. 51.

⁷ Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

⁸ Hans Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1966)

⁹ Karl Löwith, 'Review of F. Wagner, "Die Wissenschaft und die gefährdete Welt",' *Philosophische Rundschau* 15 (1968)

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', *New German Critique* 22 (1981) p. 13.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Josef Simon, 'Grammatik und Wahrheit', p. 201.

¹³ Young's interpretation of Nietzsche as a late 19th century Schopenhauerian pessimist not only ignores Nietzsche's own frequent denigration of pessimism in art, but also neglects the importance given to the notion of affirmation in most current scholarship on Nietzsche.

¹⁴ Peter Sloterdijk, *Thinker on Stage* trans. Jamie Owen Daniel (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press 1989) p. 81. In the note appended to that sentence, Sloterdijk goes on to equate tragic irony with cynicism. It will hopefully be clear that such an equation is not unquestionable, since following my account the enlightened false consciousness of cynicism which Sloterdijk presents brilliantly in his *Critique of Cynical Reason* has more in common with the reactive Nihilism of Modernity, which first needs to absorb irony in order to be transformed into the active aesthetic Nihilism of Nietzsche.

¹⁵ As Behler has observed in 'Nietzsches Auffassung der Ironie', it is precisely this understanding of irony which led it to have such important ethical ramifications in the eighteenth century, since it was seen as equivalent to a simple lie.

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. I p. 105

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 99.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 123.

¹⁹ Mark Warren, 'Nietzsche's Concept of Ideology'.

²⁰ See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. G. Bennington & B. Massumi (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984) and *Le Différend* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1983)

²¹ Lyotard, *Le Différend* pp. 257-8.

²² *The Post-modern Condition* p. 60.

²³ Cf. Lyotard, 'Presenting the Unrepresentable: the Sublime', in *Art Forum* XXI (April 1982).

²⁴ See Andreas Huyssen, 'Mapping the Postmodern', in *New German Critique* 33 (1984).

²⁵ Christopher Norris, *What's Wrong with Post-Modernism. Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy*. (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990).

²⁶Theodor Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1972). All page references will be in the text.

²⁷David Roberts, *Art and Enlightenment. Aesthetic Theory after Adorno* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

²⁸Frederic Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', in *New Left Review* 146 (1984)

²⁹Jean-François Lyotard, *Economie Libidinale*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1974).

³⁰Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972) and *Mille Plateaux*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980).

³¹Op. cit., pp. 64-5.

³²I am referring to the title of Hans Vaihinger's book, *Die Philosophie des Als Ob* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1911).

³³For more on irony in Nietzsche see Ernst Behler, 'Nietzsches Auffassung der Ironie', in *Nietzsche-Studien* 4 (1975). Behler sees irony in Nietzsche as gaining its importance as a response to the debate between Kant, Constant and the Romantics over the function of the lie. Hence, too, Nietzsche's frequent claims that all truth is a form of falsehood.

³⁴Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* trans. F. Lawrence, (London: Polity Press, 1987), chap. 1.

³⁵Blumenberg, op. cit.

³⁶For a general account of the importance of Nietzsche to Derrida, one which focuses on the importance of metaphor, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's preface to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* trans. G. Chakravorty Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). See too Ernst Behler's *Derrida - Nietzsche, Nietzsche - Derrida*.

³⁷See Günter Abel, *Nietzsche. Die Dynamik der Willen zur Macht und die ewige Wiederkehr*; 'Wissenschaft und Kunst' in Josef Simon & Mihailo Djuric (hrsg.) *Kunst und Wissenschaft bei Nietzsche* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1986); 'Logik und Ästhetik' in *Nietzsche Studien* 16 (1987); Realismus, Pragmatismus und Interpretationismus: Zu neueren Entwicklungen in der Analytischen Philosophie' in *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 13:3 (1988), 'Interpretationswelten' in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 96 (1989); 'Wahrheit als Interpretation' in Günter Abel & Jörg Salaquarda (hrsg.), *Krisis der Metaphysik* (Berlin / New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989).

³⁸Abel, 'Wahrheit als Interpretation', p. 334.

³⁹Abel, 'Realismus, Pragmatismus und Interpretationismus', p. 67.

⁴⁰Abel, 'Interpretationswelten', p. 1.

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